

Friend or Foe



Frank Samuel Child

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Frank Samuel Child

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THEY HAVE LEFT YOU DESOLATE (page 311)

FRIEND OR FOE

A TALE OF CONNECTICUT DURING
THE WAR OF 1812

BY

FRANK SAMUEL CHILD



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
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To
THE MEMORY OF
DEPUTY-GOVERNOR ROGER LUDLOW, DEPUTY-
GOVERNOR NATHAN GOLD, CHIEF JUSTICE
PETER BURR, GENERAL GOLD SELLECK
SILLIMAN, JUDGE JONATHAN
STURGES, JUDGE ROGER
M. SHERMAN,
ILLUSTRIOUS CITIZENS
OF
AN OLD NEW ENGLAND TOWN

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FRIEND OR FOE

CHAPTER I

JOHN HENRY AND HIS FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS

THE black heavens closed down upon the city of Washington one evening in early February, 1812, when John Henry picked his way through straggling streets in search of the White House.

Pelting rain, shrill, merciless winds, a dreary, hostile night, accorded with the sinister purpose in his heart,—nature's wild mood reflecting the spirit which prevailed in the Capitol of our nation.

Freighted with news which he wished to sell for gold, Crillon having kindly paved the way for him, agreeing to share the profits,—news, by the way, which the adventurer had put upon the market in England, but without a purchaser or so much as a bid,—Henry

saw the President, and made an appointment for a later interview.

His air of importance and mystery, with a highly colored story of British intrigue, won the confidence of Madison: a bargain resulted; the goods were delivered. Drawing fifty thousand dollars from contingent funds, the President paid Henry for his precious revelations.

The adventurer had stipulated that publicity should be withheld until he was safe on the high seas. This unaccredited peddler of stolen goods sailed from New York in a few days, himself the dupe of Crillon, the spurious French count, so that on Monday, March 9, President Madison sent Henry's papers to Congress, accompanied by a message charging the British government with "employing a secret agent in fomenting disaffection to the constituted authority of the nation, and in intrigues with the disaffected for the purpose of bringing about resistance to the laws, and eventually, in concert with a British force, of destroying the Union and forming the eastern part thereof into a political connection with Great Britain."

These remarkable statements fanned the passions of the war party, and for their day

became the staple of gossip and denunciation.

Was Old England sending conspirators among the people of New England? Had the secret machinations of unnamed men reached such a pass that the thrifty, energetic East stood ready to withdraw from the Union, influenced simply by commercial and mercenary motives?

Intrigue, revolution, treachery, were terms recklessly bandied about in streets, marts of trade, and public offices.

“Who is John Henry?”

The question was asked by a young man standing amid a group of loungers in the City Hotel, New York, one evening in April.

“I can tell you,” replied Gordon. “He’s a naturalized American citizen, who acted as secret agent for the Governor of Canada, a few years ago. He stayed in the neighborhood of Boston trying to gather evidences of New England’s disaffection toward the Union, and I know that he failed, for such a spirit does n’t exist. He’s sold the United States government a few papers that are worthless, for their contents incriminate nobody, and the revelations which he pretends to have made are figments of the imagination, ridiculous surmises, dastardly innuendoes.”

“You’re quite sure that what you say is true?” remarked a second member of the company, eyeing Gordon with distrust.

“Henry’s a scamp,” was the reply. “But it suits the purpose of the politicians to make capital out of his stories.”

A dozen voices were raised in protest. It was Federalist against Democrat, and the fight waged hot. Gordon, having contributed the information which one of the speakers sought, held his peace, while the more violent talkers plunged into the warfare of words and opinions.

The fact that John Henry had been a secret agent was undisputed; but it did not clearly appear that he represented at any time the British government. Nevertheless, the alarm which his papers excited spread through the land, and vague, indefinite fears lurked in many hearts.

Murray Gordon, the gentleman who gave John Henry his character on this occasion, spoke with knowledge. He did not deem it essential to say that he had met the man many times, and that he was familiar with his career in Ireland, Canada, the United States, and Great Britain. It seemed passing strange to the honorable, high-minded Gordon that Henry palmed himself off as a person of im-

portance and deceived the most credulous of the American people.

It was plain that a declaration of war against England impended. While the great peace party might resist for a season the strengthening current of public opinion, events seemed to drive the nation swiftly toward a break with the mother country.

They were hard days for Gordon. It was painful to suffer the losses of trade and commerce, — and he was no small loser since the days of the embargo, — but it was infinitely worse to feel the sting of hatred, to note the ripening of cruel animosities, to wait upon the storm of passion gathering in the heavens.

Gordon had closed up his business; it simply remained for him to guard the scattered shipping of his company. But he was not an idler, content to drift down the stream of time. A university man, widely traveled and loving study, the law school at Litchfield invited him into the hill country of Connecticut to read Blackstone. He was now attending to the odds and ends of his affairs, in order that, a few weeks later, he might plunge with fresh ardor into the pursuit of letters.

There were several reasons for going into New England. He wished to be near the

shore towns between New York and Boston. He was familiar with these places, had many acquaintances among their citizens, and sympathized with the Federalists.

His financial concerns drew him to the East, various ships connected with his company lying at the wharves of the Connecticut harbors. And there were private reasons which shaped his course. A person's chief interests do not necessarily centre in the things seen and read of all men. We often hide our great ambitions, fearing to bring ridicule upon ourselves, or to hamper the efforts which we make.

Gordon cherished a secret purpose, which had been gaining strength with the years. A worker of tremendous force, set in his opinions, sagacious, and unyielding, he braved every failure or disappointment, and quietly, unwaveringly, held to the pursuit of his great, controlling idea.

“And so you know John Henry, do you?”

The speaker leered viciously in addressing Gordon.

“I know him,” was the calm reply.

“Ever done you any harm?”

“That is my business.”

“Listen, boys; as like as not we've come

across one of the conspirators which the President tells about in his message."

There was a sudden movement toward the part of the room where Gordon stood looking into the night, so that he soon found himself the centre of a boisterous and unruly crowd. The men had been drinking heavily, and many of them were keen scented for mischief. His brief, sharp description of Henry did not please the company. Some of them pushed offensively against him.

Gordon was not the man to brook insult, although he might show a fair degree of consideration for roisterers in an unsteady condition.

"You are too familiar, sir," — shoving a drunken fellow back into the ranks of his cronies.

The motion was a signal for such an outbreak as might have been witnessed in many sections of the country at the time. Cries of Federalist, traitor, miscreant, coward, rebel, sounded above the din of groans and execrations.

"Perchance he's a member of the Eastern Junto. Let's examine him." The hubbub and excitement were passing into frenzy. Thrice had Gordon by main force pushed back the wild, reckless throng.

“I say, down with Great Britain! War to the knife!” shouted a tall, wiry youth, with ringing tones, as he quickly edged his way to the side of Gordon; “but I’m for fair play. Twenty to one is clear beyond reason. Stand back, you fellows. Hurrah for Madison! To the lake burning with fire and brimstone with your Eastern Juntos and your emissaries of treason!” Turning to Gordon, he said in an undertone: “By Jove, you’re a plucky fellow; Federalist or Democrat, give me your hand,—my name’s Jackson, and I’m from the Southwest. I’ve been in many a fracas, and fair play is the word for me.”

Jackson was evidently familiar with more or less of the crowd, for they fell back at his order, and a row was averted.

Through the whole scene, Gordon had retained his self-possession, the one calm, unruffled person in the room.

“Heavens, man, you have iron in your blood,” continued Jackson. The place had assumed its wonted aspect of hilarity and fellowship.

“My name is Gordon,”—slowly uttered by the stalwart, dignified stranger,—“I thank you for your good intentions.”

“Good intentions!” Jackson laughed as he

repeated the words ; “ why, stranger, there ’d have been an old-fashioned fist fight here in five seconds, if I had n’t interfered,” — hesitating a moment and glancing into the face of the gentleman, — “ and I guess you ’d have licked the whole crowd. But I did n’t like to see a handsome man like yourself disfigured, even if the fight went your own way.”

The two young men bowed their respects to each other, and drew their chairs into a distant corner of the room in order to cultivate an acquaintance.

CHAPTER II

COLONEL BURR RETURNS TO AMERICA

THE sloop hoisted sail the last of May. There was a handful of passengers, several being friends of the captain, his neighbors in Fairfield.

“It’s a family party,” remarked Mr. David Hardy, as they gathered on deck.

Boston was disappearing in the distance, and the open sea faced them.

“David,” — the captain smiled as he turned toward his comrade, — “you’re a great traveler. Do you know how many voyages we’ve taken together?”

“I venture to say twenty-five.”

“Double it, my hearty.”

“No?”

“This is the fiftieth time that we’ve ploughed the seas in one another’s company.”

Mr. Hardy gazed into the dim beyond while the captain attended to affairs of present importance.

“David,” — the two friends stood watching

the sloop wing its way through the boisterous waters, — “ I ’ve a strange passenger aboard. He ’s paid his twenty dollars passage money to New York, but he seems bound to hold aloof or keep himself out of sight. I can’t get a word with him. He pulls his hat over his eyes and wraps his cape about him with such an air of mystery that I grow suspicious. It may be some English spy. I wish you ’d take pains to look at the fellow when the chance comes.”

Night shut in the little vessel, and the reserved passenger appeared on deck. In his lonely vigil, the man passed and repassed Mr. David Hardy. At last a sudden purpose stirred the watcher.

“ Colonel, I cannot mistake you.”

The whistling winds did not hide a certain shading of sorrow in the tone. For a moment the men remained in hesitant attitude.

“ Ah, David, I recognized you the instant we sailed. I ’m traveling incognito.”

The two men were old associates, — distantly related. Many were the happy hours they had spent in youthful comradeship. As they now faced each other, memories of early sports, patriotic struggles in the war for Independence, and later events in which they had

shared thronged upon them. Peering through the gloom of the night, they shook hands, and then paced up and down the free deck of the vessel.

“David, you were always a good boy. I’m glad of it. I suppose you’re reaping your reward. But did you know that I had a far-away ancestor — and a woman at that — who played the very devil with things?”

“Why, colonel, you’re forgetting that the woman’s blood flows in my veins, too, and in addition to that particular taint,” — Mr. Hardy laughed in a skeptical way, — “I have a strain of witch blood from poor old Anne Hardy.”

“David,” — the colonel spoke with much of former pride and spirit, — “I’m returning to New York, where I propose to practice law.”

They continued their march up and down the vessel’s deck.

“And how was it that you picked this sloop?”

“Simply one of the chances of life. What a story of adventure I might pour into your ears! I barely slipped out of England, such were the obstacles put in my way. Before we reached Boston, I had raised thirty-two dollars by the sale of books. I disguised myself with a wig and some queer-looking

garments, then I went to the custom-house to get a permit to land my effects. The collector was Dearborn, with whom I have dined many a time, — and the family has special animosity toward me. Well, I managed to get through the ordeal without Dearborn's discovering my identity; then I went into lodgings while I tried to borrow money enough to pay my passage to New York, waiting meanwhile for a reply to letters announcing my arrival in Boston. Among the men to whom I went for help was an old comrade, who had been under my command in the expedition against Quebec in 1775. I saw his name in the directory. Going to his house, I found that he lived in fine style. I plied the knocker, and an infirm gentleman appeared.

“ ‘ Does Mr. Blank live here ? ’ said I.

“ ‘ Yes.’

“ ‘ Is he at home ? ’

“ ‘ Yes.’

“ ‘ Can I see him ? ’

“ ‘ I am the person,’ answered the old gentleman.

“ ‘ I am Aaron Burr,’ said I, bowing, and speaking in a low tone.

“ ‘ What, the Aaron Burr who was Vice-President of the United States ? ’

“ ‘The same.’ ”

“ ‘You bain’t!’ exclaimed the veteran in his bewilderment.

“Then I was invited to enter, and I made a friendly call, but it was impossible for me to ask help of that deferential, highly respectable man. Finally, I sold some more books,— my friend having interested the President of Harvard College, who called and paid me forty dollars for what I left in his hands. With this money I discharged my debts and paid my passage. It was not until we had sailed that I discovered myself to be with Fairfield people on the sloop. Why, David, Captain Dimon and a good portion of crew and passengers are relatives, I suppose. And there is a lady on board who is the very image of Theodosia,— the same large mouth, replete with goodness, sweetness, and firmness; the same large, aquiline nose, contour of face, and the two dimples; and when disturbed, knits the brow and forehead in the same singular manner; the form of the eye the same,— very long, the color not quite so dark. There is only wanting the broad forehead of *ma fille* to be perfect. I look at her with inexpressible interest. Who is she?”

“It is the captain’s wife. She’s the picture

of my niece Mary, the oldest daughter of Loís, you remember.”

Then followed such confidences as the man of the world and the man of the cloister occasionally repose in each other, — confidences which in their telling stretched into the early morning hours.

It was on the second day out that Gordon, one of Captain Dimon’s frequent passengers, accosted the man traveling incognito.

“It is several years since we passed the time of day with each other, but Colonel Burr is a gentleman not easily forgotten.”

“I was saying to my old friend, David Hardy, last night, that every day I walked the streets of Boston I expected some one to slap me on the shoulder and exclaim, ‘Colonel Burr, by heavens!’ but it was foreordained that the only men to claim acquaintance and give me greetings should be fellow passengers on this petty sloop.”

He spoke with perfect self-possession, his native courtesy and good humor shading the reply.

“I regret that England did not show you a more friendly spirit,” remarked Gordon. “I cherish a certain kindness on your part with tender recollections.”

Burr smiled and thanked the speaker, pleased with any word of cheer.

“Why do you stay in America, my” —

“Gordon is the name,” interrupted the young man. “I’ve reverted to an earlier patronymic.”

“And my ship name, as you will see by reading the passenger list of the *Aurora*, is Mr. Arnot.”

“An interesting coincidence,” said Gordon, laughing heartily.

“We both travel incognito.”

The sloop arrived at Fairfield about eleven o’clock on the night of June 3, where she lingered two days, but Mr. Hardy’s efforts to bring Colonel Burr on shore proved unavailing. Gordon, glad of the privilege, disembarked, and spent a few delightful hours in the home of Mr. David Hardy.

It was late in the afternoon that little Davie Randolph — brother of the sisters who were entertaining uncle David’s guest — hastened into the house to tell them of a very strange man who was seen on the street: —

“He passed here three or four times, and looked about him and then hurried away.”

More than one child noticed the solitary traveler roaming through the shaded walks,

leaning against venerable elms, or climbing to the little hills and gazing down upon the beautiful landscape. More than one man or woman observed the stranger tarry in the shadows of the boxwood hedge fronting the Thaddeus Burr mansion. Flitting expressions of regret and amusement, joy and sorrow, hope, despair, wounded pride, glowing ambition, the sentimentalism of young manhood, the hardened resistance of bitter defeat in age, were limned upon the smooth, mobile countenance of the man.

The fair June day found no counterpart in the soul of Aaron Burr. A man of extraordinary powers, gifted above the most of his contemporaries, winning the confidence of his associates, commanding a generous, personal loyalty, attaining a leadership which evoked deep and genuine enthusiasm, — suddenly thwarted in his masterful plans, cast down to earth from his lofty pedestal, driven from his native land by the rising tumult of hatred and anathema, — an exile across the sea, avoided, embittered, lonely, impoverished, — passing from one retreat to another in his morbid restlessness, — at last forced by uncontrollable impulse to adventure once again into the loved, familiar places, and breast the shame,

the hatred of his foes and the suspicions or indifference of old friends,—such was Aaron Burr on that June day of 1812, as he lingered with pathetic, turbulent memories amid the bright, yet painful associations of Fairfield, the home of his ancestors,—the place made sweet by many happy days.

David Hardy saw him passing the homestead, but he did not have the heart to interrupt the man in his sad walk. Who was able to foretell the future of this brilliant, self-willed spirit?

With bent head and wrinkled 'brow, Burr passed from the sight of his early comrade, casting one long, distressed look behind him, hastening back to the sloop like one vainly striving to rid himself of harassing memories.

“Colonel Burr was very kind to me in years gone by, and once I did him a small service,” — Mr. Gordon was saying farewell to Mistress Mary and Mistress Martha Randolph, as they stood near the primrose bushes while the twilight spread across the heavens. “But his greatest kindness is this last, for it was he who suggested to Mr. Hardy that I go ashore and become your guest. He has put me under eternal obligations.”

The face of the elder sister glowed with a radiance caught from the sunset sky.



THE HOME OF HIS ANCESTORS

“Uncle David is a hospitable soul when not absorbed in knotty problems,” was the inconsequent reply.

“They tell me you are the image of the far-famed Theodosia,” — addressing Miss Mary; “never more shall I discredit the reputed charm and beauty of the colonel’s daughter.”

“A fair wind and a bright day for your sail down the sound,” said Miss Martha, wishing her good-speed to the parting guest and shielding her sister from further compliments.

Three weeks later, the New York “Columbian” contained the following item: “Colonel Burr, says a Boston paper of Wednesday, once so celebrated for his talents and latterly so much talked of for his sufferings, arrived at Newburyport from France and England, and passed through this town on his way to New York.”

“Have you seen Burr?” inquired Gordon one day, as he and Jackson were dining at the City Hotel.

“Yes,” was the answer, “and he told me that on the day it was publicly advertised that he had opened a law office, as many as five hundred gentlemen called upon him.”

CHAPTER III

A GUEST OF MRS. "DOLLY" MADISON

MARSHALL PEYTON, having taken possession of his large estates in Virginia, passed the business over to factors and prepared for a long absence from home. On his journey North, he tarried a week with friends in Washington, parrying their questions, and driven to such evasion that he longed for his day of escape.

The young man was a favorite guest at Monticello and the White House, one of the happy gallants which Mrs. Madison chose to honor with her friendship.

"Why don't you go into the army, if you long to get away from the old plantation?" "What set your mind on studying law at the school in Litchfield, when you can go into any office in your native State?" "How can you be content to stay in the cold climate of the North among the inhospitable, Puritanic New Englanders?" These and scores of like questions were asked Peyton by his Southern

neighbors when he told them about his plans.

But the President and Mrs. Madison, the Secretary of State, and a few political friends praised Peyton for his independence and courage. There were dinners and suppers for the entertainment of the youth, — little excursions down the river and through the woods, a merry dance in the great bare east room of the White House, where the mistress often saw the linen drying, — and a great party to which the Federalists (who, with the exception of Livingston had refused to enter Mr. Madison's door since the publication of the *Henry Letters*) came in vast numbers and met the young friend of the family. War had been declared, and feeling against Old England and New England ran high in the circles of the administration. Peyton was making up his mind in respect to matters, — giving his opinions a chance to crystallize.

“Don't forsake your kith and kin,” said his hostess on the morning that he mounted the stage for New York.

Mrs. Madison wore a dress of some dark gray stuff, — she still affected the Quaker colors in quiet hours, — with a spotless white apron, and pinned across her breast was a delicate, snowy kerchief.

“And write us all the news,” she continued, as Peyton kissed her cheek and said his affectionate good-by.

It was a sweet picture, which he long carried in memory, — the lovely, dignified woman waving her adieus and watching the coach fade out of sight. It reminded him of boyhood days, when an over-fond and tenderly indulgent mother sent him away to school with her prayers. People had told him many times that Mrs. Dolly Madison was like her, so he felt wondrously drawn to this great lady.

“You will give us full particulars,” observed a gentleman seated by Peyton’s side. “Mark every change and condition; visit Boston and other centres when practicable.”

“Don’t put too heavy a burden upon me,” replied the young man quietly. “I shall get my fill of Federalism in Litchfield, so that it will be unnecessary to play the part of a circuit rider through New England.”

Peyton’s companion rode with him a short distance out of the city, then climbing down from his perch upon the coach, and mounting a horse which a slave had brought into the country for him, returned to Washington.

When Peyton arrived at New York, he chose the City Hotel for his few days' stay.

"Did you gentlemen speak of Litchfield?"

He addressed Jackson and Gordon, as they stood on the street one morning talking over their plans.

"Yes," answered Jackson, with interest. "Are you also bound for the hill country of Connecticut?"

"I'm expecting to enter the law school," — Peyton was longing for company. "Have I the honor to meet brethren in pursuit of legal knowledge?"

"My name is Jackson, — I'm from the Southwest. This is my friend Gordon. He hails from the country at large, — Philadelphia, New York, Boston, New London, — where you please. It's a bad time for trade on the high seas, therefore he betakes himself to law."

The gentlemen bowed and shook hands with cordiality.

"We are talking about the ride back into the country. Gordon here will take a horse with him. I must content myself with the stage. How is it with you?"

"I wish that it had occurred to me to bring a horse North. My name is Peyton,

and Virginia is my home. It would have been a delightful trip. Yes, I'm a coach passenger. When do you start?"

The following day the three young men were en route for the hill-top seat of learning, going by way of Danbury and New Milford. What rare opportunities for making acquaintance the stage-coach afforded! People were packed into narrow spaces, regardless of comfort or good clothes. It was impossible to sit grumpy and silent all day long, for one must now and again do something for his own relief or the good cheer of his neighbor, else the journey would have been unendurable.

And there were frequent adjustments and readjustments, — a few getting out, a few getting in, — somebody passing around the cookies and doughnuts, — a baby crying, or a child falling asleep and tumbling into the lap of a fellow-passenger, or an awful lurch of the vehicle which mixed up the inside passengers to such an extent that it required a good fifteen minutes to get everybody properly placed again, with hat or bonnet on head, wraps becomingly arranged, bundles and packages restored to rightful owners, and the spirits of the travelers quieted to the ordinary sociability of the occasion.

It was a moment after they had passed one of the many toll-gates on the way that a tremendous commotion was excited on a sudden within the narrow quarters of the coach. The recent shaking up had finally put all the travelers in excellent humor, and they were enjoying the fine scenery in a quiet, deprecating way peculiar to the natives of the State, — it being considered waste time to gaze on sunsets, autumn foliage, or lovely vales and rugged hills, when there was a chance to work.

“Lord - a - massy !” exclaimed a horny-handed, prosperous-looking man of middle age, “I’ve lost my wallet.”

It was not five seconds before every man and woman in the coach had plunged a hand into the pocket, or some other accustomed hiding-place of pocket-book, in order to discover whether the loss was simply personal to the one excited man, or a universal dispensation of Providence.

“I say, driver,” shouted the strong-lunged individual, “stop, will you! I’ve lost my wallet, and it’s got more ’n fifty dollars in it.”

Three times did the agitated traveler repeat his stentorian command, for the rumble and racket of the coach drowned the human

voice at the moment, — they had reached a rough and stony piece of road.

Some one on top of the coach plucked the arm of the driver, and indicated this outbreak of trouble inside. So the master of the ribbons brought the horses to a halt, and leaned over the edge of the coach to catch the drift of lively talk.

“I say, driver,” repeated the man, “I’ve lost my wallet. It’s got more’n fifty dollars in it. I—I” — The speaker stumbled over his words, and flung himself hither and thither in the coach as he continued the examination of his pockets, and plunged down to the bottom of the vehicle, embarrassing fellow passengers by his proximity to their feet and legs, shoving them on one side without any “By your leave, sir,” or the slightest consideration of their reluctance to be jostled, elbowed, pinched, or squeezed.

“Now, this is extremely unfortunate,” observed Jackson, in a gentlemanly tone. “Suppose we all descend from the coach, and give our friend a chance to shake himself and search for his wallet.”

“Yes, yes, by all means,” assented Peyton.

“But, I fear,” continued the smooth-spoken Southwesterner, “that the gentleman may

have let go his wallet when that awful lurch of the coach threw us all into a heap; in which case, it may be lying by the roadside two or three miles back."

"Law, me!" exclaimed a spinster, "I did n't know but it might be my purse which was gone, but 'tis n't," an expression of devout thankfulness lighting her countenance as she spoke.

The search for the lost property proved unavailing, and the travelers became impatient to hasten on their journey.

"Well, sir, we must move forward." The driver addressed the nervous, exasperated loser of the wallet, and all the passengers climbed into the coach or upon it.

"Let us ride on top." Peyton was suggesting a change.

"Yes," — Jackson spoke, — "if we stay inside, we may lose our wallets. And, by the way, our friend is doubtless embarrassed by his loss," — turning to the unhappy man; "permit me to loan you whatever you need. I'm going to Litchfield. The loan will not inconvenience me in the least."

Jackson pulled from his trousers pocket a roll of bills, and awaited the reply of his fellow traveler.

“I declare!” exclaimed the man with amazement, “that looks like the very — Oh, yes, thank you, young man. I come from up Litchfield way myself” — he shook with curious excitement as he spoke; “I’ll accept the loan of a few dollars until I can get upon my feet again.”

Jackson handed over the currency while the coach lumbered along its way, skirting the eastern shore of the Ousatonic.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH THE INKSTAND GIVES WAY TO A MUSKET

THE law school was one of the famous institutions in the land, a magnet drawing to the town of Litchfield many intellectual and ambitious youth.

Gordon, Peyton, and Jackson entered upon their new life with spirit. Distinguished above the majority of their fellows in respect to capacity, well read and conversant with the world, they shone in the class-room, on the floor as debaters, and in private conversation.

Gordon was a slow body, reserved and dignified; Peyton, nervous and impulsive; Jackson, insinuating, deferential, easy, subtle.

As the three handsome fellows passed up and down the broad street, with inkstands in hand and portfolios under the arm, people gazed upon them with peculiar interest, for they were striking in their appearance, representing quite distinct types of manhood.

In respect to politics they invariably disagreed, one being conservative, the second moderate, and the third radical.

Gordon was quiet in his dress, eschewing gay colors; Peyton manifested a shocking carelessness as to personal appearance; while Jackson managed to adorn himself with the colors of the rainbow. The dash and energy of the youth from the Southwest, his fertility of invention and remarkable adaptability, contrasted strikingly with the calm, self-contained manner of Gordon and the dreamy, poetic air of Peyton, the sentimentalist.

"I'm going to enlist." Months had passed since their coming to Litchfield.

"When, Jackson?"

Gordon asked the question, as the three friends returned from one of Judge Gould's lectures.

"I've set so many times for it, and then been forced to change my plans so often, that I don't venture to name another date."

"Judge Reeves does n't say much concerning his brother-in-law, Burr?"

Gordon turned toward Jackson as he put the question.

"No," was the answer. "Perhaps he's sensitive."

“How did Colonel Burr appear, the last time you saw him?”

“Well, sir, it was pathetic beyond words. If ever a man loved a child, he loved his daughter, Theodosia. And you know that her devotion matched his. It was weeks after the news of the ship’s loss came to him that I had my last interview; but he was convinced that Mrs. Alston was drowned, and so had given up all hope. He referred to the event with perfect self-control, speaking quite philosophically; and yet it was evident that he was a heart-broken, overwhelmed old man. The tears came to my eyes, and I cudgeled my brain to think of something comforting to say, but what availed it? I tried to express my sympathy, and he cut me short in his characteristic way, bidding me eat, drink, and be merry. He’s a true Chesterfieldian, if ever there lived one.”

“I wonder if the man feels remorse? What does he say about Hamilton?”

“I can answer that question.” Jackson spoke with heat. “He never blamed himself in that affair. I’ve heard him tell the story more than once. He feels justified in his course from beginning to end.”

“So he went to Fairfield, did he?” Gor-

don did not care to hear the story of the duel, so he put another question.

“ Yes, he visited the captain of the sloop, but I infer that it was a visit crowded with memories not altogether cheerful. Perhaps the same neglect or aversion noticed in New York on the part of old friends was repeated in the town of his ancestors. I know that Mrs. Randolph went to Stonington with her daughters, so that he did not see them, although he had been told that Miss Mary was the image of Mrs. Alston, and naturally he longed to look upon her fair face.”

“ *You* have made several visits in that neighborhood during the past few months, Jackson. I hope it's nothing serious ? ”

Peyton smiled quizzically as he spoke.

“ Well, we agree, I think, that the daughters of Mrs. Randolph are charming young ladies. And where will you meet a more fascinating gentleman than quaint old uncle David ? ”

“ A pure soul, our modern Bayard, — the knight without fear and without reproach.” Peyton spoke with genuine enthusiasm. “ My friends, it's not often that we meet such a lovable man.

“ I agree with you, Peyton.” There was a glow of appreciation in the eyes of Gordon.

“Colonel Tallmadge tells me that Mr. Hardy was always the kind, noble, great-hearted gentleman, brave as a lion, totally indifferent to self, tender as a woman, keen in his sense of honor, and appallingly truthful, even in his most delightful and affectionate moods. I don’t wonder that men confide their secrets to him, and that he is counted a friend at large, ordained to serve everybody in distress. If he had lived in the old days, what a champion he would have been on every field that involved innocence, helplessness, or humanity!”

“Why, Gordon,” exclaimed Jackson, “you surprise me with your fervor. I did n’t know uncle David had made such a friend. Are you altogether disinterested in this unstinted admiration?”

There was a slight flush upon Gordon’s cheeks as he replied: —

“Jackson, you can’t appreciate the finer qualities of Mr. Hardy. Colonel Burr is a man more to your mind. There is n’t ambition and brilliancy enough in the sturdy, modest patriot to suit your fancy.”

The conversation was interrupted by the approach of another student, freighted with the latest news. The war was certainly driv-

ing many people to desperation. Stagnation of business, depression of the currency, a series of defeats in the west, disagreement with the national government in respect to policy, extreme poverty, and prevailing sense of unrest made it a time favorable for the activity of desperate men.

“Did you say there were seven robberies?” inquired Gordon, as the fellow student told his story.

“Yes,” was the answer; “all done with such expertness and dispatch that not a single trace of the criminal has been found.”

At this point the students entered their lecture-room.

Later in the day came the news of Perry’s victory on Lake Erie.

“We have met the enemy, and they are ours; two ships, two brigs, one schooner, and one sloop.”

This first capture of an English squadron — an unparalleled event — freshened the martial impulse of Jackson so that within the week he was pushing toward the frontier in order to join the militia from his State.

CHAPTER V

CAPTAIN JACKSON RETURNS FROM THE WAR

“MR. GORDON has given Davie a lottery ticket. Is n't he kind?”

The sisters were busy on the back porch, one making beautiful napery for the table, the other plying her needle with deft swift fingers.

“I suppose it's the lottery for the bridge over the Ousatonic. The drawing is at New Haven, in October, is n't it?”

“Yes,” was Mary's answer.

“Well, it seems to me it's lotteries and lotteries. Every bridge and meeting-house and public institution that is builded must have a lottery to help pay the cost.”

“But it's amazingly exciting. In fact, Martha, the summer has not had a dull day. War may be awfully distressing and bring in its wake an enormous amount of suffering, but it has some compensations — the Fourth Regiment in town, for example.”

Mary spoke with levity, while Martha frowned a disapproval. “I suppose you'd

jest over a second burning of Fairfield, if you had the opportunity."

"Martha, I'd sooner laugh than cry, any day. And I think it has been the delightfulest summer of my life. Think how much company we've had, and what blithe hours down in the pines by the sea or back among the hills a-picnicking, and the numbers of charming books that we have read together, and all the little parties which the friends have made. Why, it has been a season of captivating gayety, although war clouds hover above the horizon and we've had half a dozen frights over the reported coming of the enemy."

"They say that folks in New London have kept their silver and china buried so long in their yards and gardens that what is n't tarnished, defaced, or broken is lost. Such queer things are done in time of war or fire."

"I say, girls, Gordon is the best man. He gave me a lottery ticket, and it's sure to win a prize, cuz I'm always lucky."

Little Davie suddenly projected himself into the conversation. The rogue appeared at the door with flushed face and eager eyes.

"Mr. Gordon, you mean."

"Gordon, for short," saucily piped the child.

“I suppose we may look for Mr. Jackson soon.” Mary ignored Davie’s interruption.

“I say, girls, do you know what they call the rats which they catch down at the tide-mill?”

“No,” replied Martha, in a tone which showed that her curiosity was piqued. “What is it, Davie?”

“Federalists.” The boy’s expression was one of great contempt.

“I caught a mole in my trap, and I took it down to the old mill and showed it to the men, and I said, ‘What do you suppose I’ve got,’ and they all shouted, ‘Another Federalist!’ and I said, ‘No, I’ve caught a Democrat.’”

“A what?” asked Mary, shaking with laughter.

“A Democrat, I say, — a Democrat. Are you deaf?”

“Davie, Davie, I fear me that you are profane. You mean a Democrat, I suppose.” Martha corrected the boy.

“But why did you call the mole a Democrat?” Mary was indifferent to the distinction between “dam” and “dem.” It was the working of little David’s mind that interested her.

“That’s plain enough,” he answered. “They call us Federalists,” — swelling with importance, — “rats, and we’ve eyes and can see things; but them moles have n’t eyes and can’t see anything, so I call ’em Damocrats.”

The lucid explanation was received with merry peals of laughter.

“Well, Davie, you’re cut out for a philosopher.” Mary was still laughing as she spoke. “But I hope you won’t repeat the story to Mr. Jackson — no, Captain Jackson — when he comes. You might hurt his feelings.”

“I don’t care if I do,” exclaimed the child. “I don’t like Jackson; he’s too sharp.”

“You ought not to talk that way, David.” When Martha was especially severe in rebuking her brother, she invariably addressed him by his “grown-up” name. “Mr. Jackson has very correct manners, and always conducts himself like a gentleman in our presence.”

“He does, eh?” The child’s nose was suddenly elevated so that it expressed the most emphatic dissent. “You ought to see him when he gets mad and swears. I tell you he can make things hum when he takes that tack.”

“Why, Davie!” Mary’s face assumed a horrified aspect. “You are prejudiced against him because he’s a Democrat. You must remember that I’m a Democrat, too.”

“Gordon’s the fellow for me. He’s a square man, and he loves the woods, and lets me fire his gun and fish with his tackle, and we go swimming together. You just ought to see him tumble out of a boat and scoot along under water like a fish, and then climb up on the top of some wave rods away and puff like a porpoise. But then, you girls can’t see us boys in the water, of course, cuz we’re stripped, you know, and I suppose it would n’t be proper. Next to uncle David, Gordon’s the best man in all the world.”

“Well, Davie, the gentleman has a loyal friend in you. Stand up for your friends, child. Be true to them always. I love you for it.”

“Do you love me any better cuz I like Gordon?” The boy looked straight into the eyes of Mary Randolph.

“You ask too many questions.” It was Martha who came to the rescue.

“Oh, I know a thing or two. You girls can’t pull the wool over my eyes. I’m neither a mole nor a Democrat.”

“Mr. David Hardy Randolph, I’ve a mind to box your ears.” Mary dropped her task and started for the boy, who was too agile a person to be caught by any older sister. Placing one thumb upon his nose, stretching his fingers in a fan-like shape, and joining a second thumb with four accompanying fingers to the peculiar gymnastic, the child wriggled his digits significantly, and withdrew in great haste.

“I expect he’ll be the death of us,” cried Mary, as she returned to work gasping for breath, laughing in spite of herself.

“Captain Jackson will have a great fund of war stories to relate on his return. But it’s a very humiliating conflict, and I doubt if even he is able to tell anything that will rouse our pride or feed our vanity.” Martha was addressing her sister, a few minutes after the disappearance of Davie.

“Don’t croak. We’ll make up on the sea what we forfeit on the land. My blood tingles when I read about the Constitution and the splendid fighting of our stanch little navy.”

“But there’s no enthusiasm in the land. The country is divided on the question of war. The President says one thing, and our

Commonwealth says another. There is n't the same spirit that was manifest when uncle David and Colonel Tallmadge and all the brave hearts fought for our independence."

"Well, now, I think there has been a good deal of enthusiasm. Did n't Boston give Captain Hull a magnificent reception when he returned from the destruction of the *Guerrière*? And you heard Mr. Gordon describe Decatur's arrival and entertainment at New London. Why, the town went daft in its rejoicings, the authorities presenting him with public thanks, ending the show with a ball in his honor. And then we've read all about the banquet in New York, at Gibson's City Hotel, given to Hull, Jones, and Decatur. What is the first verse of the printer-poet's effusion?

'The banner of freedom high floated unfur'd
While the silver-tipp'd surges in low homage curl'd,
Flashing bright round the bow of Decatur's brave bark,
In contest, an eagle — in chasing, a lark.'

Martha, we've had victory after victory so brilliant that they have made a profound sensation in England as well as the United States. And grander things will come."

"When some British fleet anchors off the shore, and this town and other exposed places

suffer, you'll see the folly of such a war as this country now wages."

"Martha, what do you suppose Mr. Gordon finds to busy himself about in New London? He's been there and to Stonington and Newport half a dozen times these last few months."

"If he thought it wise for us to know, he'd probably tell us," was the reply.

"When Mr. Gordon discloses any secrets, please inform me. He's a good friend, a charming companion, and one of the most intelligent people I've ever known, but he remains as deep a mystery to-day as he was the first day that we saw him. Did you ever hear him say a word concerning his family or his early years? It's terribly aggravating to like a man who surrounds himself with such secrecy."

"Do you prefer to associate with some one who talks incessantly about himself, — Jackson, for example?"

"But Jackson has adventures to relate, and he reels them off with the dash and freshness of an old salt. I know that he generally plays the leading part in his story, and why should n't he? Whose stories ought a man to tell well, if not his own, —

stories that he has lived, — pages out of his own history ?”

The conversation was disturbed by the resounding strokes of the knocker. Mary hastened through the house in response to the summons. There was the accent of cordial greetings, followed by the appearance of the three friends from the Litchfield Law School.

“ You are very welcome, gentlemen,” — Martha arose, and extended her hand, — “ it is months since we have seen you together.” Jackson received the first hand-shake, Peyton the second, and Gordon the third.

“ Is n't it delightful ?” Mary was radiant. “ But you are lame, Mr. Jackson ?”

“ Only a slight wound in the thigh,” the soldier replied to Miss Randolph. “ I'm fast recovering from it.”

“ Oh, how romantic. We did n't know that you had been wounded. Is n't there something that we can do for you ?”

Both the girls showed real concern for their guest. During the months of Jackson's absence there had been nothing but indirect communication between him and his Fairfield friends. An occasional letter to Peyton or Gordon, a brief paragraph in a New York or

a Boston paper, or "Niles's Register," such were the infrequent and unsatisfactory means of news in respect to the Western volunteer. It had never been told them that Jackson was wounded, or that he had passed through other than the ordinary experiences of frontier soldiering.

"Oh, thank you. I fear that neglect and improper treatment on the field necessarily ends my brief career as a soldier. I hope that I shall not be lame forever. The doctors are very comforting, for they say I may thank my stars I did n't lose a leg."

The sisters seemed more interested in this explanation than Peyton or Gordon.

A keen observer might have detected signs of skepticism or annoyance on the part of Jackson's companions.

The cool, rear porch of the house, curtained with a luxuriant Virginia creeper, was an alluring place on this summer day, — to this beautiful retreat Mary had conducted the visitors.

The young people were exchanging the commonplaces of welcome and eliciting the brief, cordial responses of their friends when there was the sudden racket of a rolling pail on the roof above them, and the leap of this

article to the ground, where it was dashed into pieces, followed immediately by the drip, drip of a copious water-flow from the eaves.

“Martha, Davie’s up to some of his tricks again. Will you see what he’s doing?”

The gentlemen standing under the dripping eaves stepped quickly within the porch’s shelter, while Martha went in pursuit of the mischief-maker, and Mary diverted the attention of the callers.

“Did you come on horseback all the way from Litchfield, Captain Jackson?” She made the word “captain” quite emphatic.

“Yes,” was the reply, “although I have been forbidden horseback riding for six months. You see the doctors think it will aggravate my wound.”

“Don’t do it, then.” Mary spoke with tenderness and sympathy.

“Oh, I can’t live like a hermit after all the active service I’ve seen. And the stage-coach shakes me up worse than a good canter on my horse’s back. It’s nearly two weeks since I returned. I thought I’d come down and talk over the war with you, and Peyton and Gordon said it was a sin for me to travel alone in my feeble condition,” — spoken jocosely, — “so they insisted on bearing me company.”

“And you ’ll tell us all about your adventures? Do begin at once. No, wait until Martha comes back. Ah, here she is. Now we ’ll learn something concerning the war at first hand.”

Seated in easy attitudes within a grateful shelter from the sun, the little company listened to the thrilling personal narrative of Captain Jackson, a highly embellished story, composed of hairbreadth escapes and daring achievements. It was told with great skill, a loose rein evidently being given to imagination, that most essential element in the veracious historian’s narrative. Even Davie, who had crept along under the shelter of the vines, in order that he might view the group and plot fresh mischief, was held spell-bound by the recital.

But Jackson did not find congenial hearers in Gordon and Peyton. They had changed during his absence, or was the change in himself?

The three men still lodged in the same private house, walking to lectures in each other’s company, taking their meals at one table, their horses were stabled at a neighboring farmer’s, — they exchanged books and talked politics, religion, literature, business, law, and kindred themes with endless argu-

ment and contradiction. But Jackson did not slip into his former relation of intimacy. Were they jealous of his military honors? Or had they found reason for distrusting him so that they must needs withhold their confidence?

“I don’t like to talk about a man behind his back,” observed Peyton to Gordon one day, “but I can’t feel toward Jackson as I did last year. I’ve heard say that military life demoralizes a fellow, but it is n’t that I can point to this or that difference in him, or give any reason for the thing. I simply don’t like him. Do you?”

Gordon stroked his chin, shifted his position, and said nothing in reply.

“He tells a mighty good story,” Peyton continued, “and some of his yarns bear the impress of fact, but taken as a whole, I think they smell fishy.”

No reply was made to this further proposition.

CHAPTER VI

THE LIGHTS BURN BLUE

It had been observed by Gordon's friends in Litchfield that the young man held frequent correspondence with individuals in several of the shore towns, and on various occasions hurried to New Haven, Stonington, or New London.

"I don't wish to force your confidence," said Peyton to his comrade one day, "but your absences from lectures and your repeated excursions into the southern part of the State excite my curiosity."

"Why," answered Gordon, "did n't I tell you that I had shipping interests? Come down with me on some of these trips and keep me company."

So one day in late December, 1813, the two young men started for New London.

This important maritime capital, headquarters for a large commercial business, was familiar ground to Gordon.

For several years Fulton had been experi-

menting with his torpedo boats, and as he had illustrated their workings before a picked company of British naval officers in 1807, the enemy were wary in their approaches to the Connecticut shores.

“We gave them a lesson they will not soon forget,” remarked Peyton, as the two gentlemen entered New London. He was referring to the adventure with the *Eagle*. “I’ve heard one of the crew tell the story,” he continued, without waiting for a reply from Gordon. “It was a private enterprise. John Scudder, Junior, planned the thing. He put ten kegs of gunpowder in the hold of the schooner in a strong cask, mixing it with sulphur, surrounding it with stones and other missiles. Within the cask at its head were fixed two gunlocks, cords being fastened to their triggers at one end and two barrels of flour at the other. Removing the flour barrels, of course, would spring the locks; then the powder would be ignited, and the devil was to pay. Well, Captain Riker took the schooner up to Millstone Point, and when they were chased by boats from the *Ramillies*, the crew deserted the craft and pulled for the shore. As the *Eagle* appeared to carry a good cargo of supplies, and the seizing of

such American vessels was a common incident of the blockade, she was put under charge of a dozen marines from the warship and started for the Ramillies. The wind died down so that the progress was slow. When boats were sent out as lighters to the schooner, the hatches were opened and men began to transfer the cargo; but the removal of the first barrel brought on the explosion. They say it was an awful sight. The schooner, the dozen men on board, and the provisions were blown to atoms, while the men in the near-by boats were more or less injured, and showers of refuse fell even on the deck of the Ramillies. The man who described the explosion said that a fire-column nine hundred feet in height spurted into the air."

"Peyton, I don't believe in that kind of warfare, do you?"

"Why not? Don't you think that instant death and wholesale destruction signify less pain and quicker settlement of difficulties?"

"It's the humanity of the method you like, is it?" Gordon spoke with a show of feeling.

"Yes, and its effectiveness."

"Don't you know that the English government refused to adopt Fulton's invention?"

And the United States themselves will have nothing to do with such diabolical machines.”

“Gordon, tell me where your sympathies are, with England or America, in this conflict.”

This point-blank question remained unanswered.

“It is hard on Decatur, is n’t it?” Gordon looked over the bay and up the river as he spoke. “But if one must be bottled up, this is as pleasant a spot as one could select.”

“I think that Hardy does not find the bottling business altogether to his mind. I wonder how many attempts to blow up his ship have been made since he came into these waters?”

There was no answer to the question.

“I’ve heard of a Norwich man who made something after the model of Bushnell’s invention, and went under the Ramillies three times. It’s too bad that a broken screw prevented his fixing his torpedo to the bottom of the English ship. And there was a Long Island fisherman who carried his torpedo in a whaleboat and came near destroying the man-of-war. Why, they say the commodore has become so frightened that he keeps his ship in motion a good deal of the time, and

orders her bottom swept every two hours; and you heard that he wrote to Justice Terry of Southold that if the folks allowed any torpedo boats to remain among them, and he found it out, he'd raze every house near the shore? I suppose a man must have an uncomfortable and anxious feeling when he believes that any moment he may be hoisted out of sight by one of these infernal mechanisms."

"The blockade is very rigorous these days, I am told. It's rough on the farmers and sailors. For my part, I wish the struggle was ended."

"I agree with you," said Peyton.

The people of New London did not live a peaceful or monotonous life during these many months of blockade. Time and again the town was swept by rumors of assault, bombardment, or the attempted breaking away of Decatur's fleet. One day the sloop *Roxana* was chased by three British barges and driven aground. The people on the shore hastened to her rescue, but the enemy fired the vessel, and although many attempts to extinguish the flames were made, yet the fierce cannonading of the British drove away the rescuers.

Another day it was a skirmish between whaleboats from Long Island and the long-boats of the hostile ships; while the night was often made the convenient season for desperate adventures and perilous enterprises.

It was while the young gentlemen lingered in New London that the story of John Carpenter was told them.

“It makes my blood run cold,” observed Peyton excitedly. “I’ve a mind to enlist even at this late day.”

“Don’t believe all you hear,” was the answer.

“But think of it, man, — the son of a respected citizen of the State impressed into the service of the Ramillies and brought back here to his very neighborhood? They say it was one of the most affecting scenes a fellow ever witnessed. You see the boy sent word to his family in Norwich, his father came down here, went off to the ship with a flag, and when the two met on the deck, the most hardened heart was moved to tears. The father was wise enough to bring the proper testimonials with him, and it being such a clear case, no one could gainsay the evidence.”

“Well, the boy was returned to his parents, was n’t he?” Gordon spoke with

sharpness. "It was to the credit of Hardy, I take it."

"To the credit of Hardy!" — the inflection denoted skepticism, — "it was to the shame of the English people that the boy was ever impressed into service."

"I grant the justice of your remark, but bear in mind that a great many cruel things are done in peace as well as in war, and done by Americans and Englishmen who know better."

The night of Sunday the 12th was dark and windy. Peyton remained at the tavern, listening to the yarns of the loungers who ventured forth in search of fellowship. Gordon had an engagement which detained him abroad, so that it was late when he returned.

This was the night which Decatur had chosen for attempting to run the blockade. All through the summer and autumn he had been watching for a chance to drop down the river and put to sea. As the cold weather settled over New England, and the British grew less vigilant in their guard, he brought his ships down opposite Market Wharf, and waited for the sheltering darkness. Everything seemed to favor the plan on this particular night, — wind, tide, clouds. All was

in readiness, waiting upon the word for a start.

At this critical moment the bow-guard of the *Hornet* and *Macedonian* reported that blue lights were burning near the mouth of the river. Great excitement prevailed in Decatur's little fleet, for they were taken as signals warning the enemy of the Americans' approach. The well-laid plans of escape were immediately abandoned, and, deeply chagrined, Decatur gave up the attempt.

"Have you heard the news?" asked Peyton, as Gordon appeared next morning.

"No!" was the matter-of-fact reply.

"Why, Decatur did n't escape last night. They say that lights on the shore warned the British of our intentions, so that they were prepared to cut off escape or give chase."

"Well, such a thing is possible, for the town folks knew what Decatur proposed to do. I heard it on the streets and in the tavern repeatedly."

"But who would be such a traitor to his country as to play this contemptible trick?"

"You forget that the British fleet may have friends on shore, — people willing to do them any favor. And then it may be that Decatur was deceived. How does he know that the

lights were intended for the enemy, or that they had any necessary connection with his running the blockade?"

"Why, that's what people are saying and what Decatur himself thinks. And there's no denying the fact."

But Gordon continued skeptical. Nothing was proved; it was all guesswork. Later in the day some one accused the Federalists of it.

"I've been told that it was members of the peace party," remarked Peyton to his friend, "but I don't believe it. Such a charge is a libel upon honorable men."

So opinions shifted, and the blue lights were enveloped in mystery.

The young men lingered in New London for a week, swept into the strong currents of prevailing excitement, taking their diffident part in the talk of the day.

On their ride back into the hills they had the chance to feel the pulse of the people. Two great political parties arraigned each other with bitter invectives, beggaring the mother tongue in their harsh phrase-making, embroiling persons and communities in local quarrels and conflicts, — shadowing all life with trouble and sorrow.

CHAPTER VII

“IF EVERY MAN HAD HIS DESERTS”

THE affairs of Captain Jackson did not prosper these days. Returning to the East a wounded soldier crowned with honors, he had anticipated warm greetings and the many sweet praises of admiring friends. But after the first kind welcome had been given and the story of his adventures told, life moved along on the former humdrum level.

“Heavens!” said the young man to himself, — his most appreciative listener, — “I believe they snub me, a patriot that has risked life and limb for sake of country. They’re a set of blanked Federalists in this neighborhood.”

Captain Jackson was changed. The virtues which formerly shone with lustre had been dimmed by the rough usages of war. Naturally imperious, he had become overbearing and insolent, almost regardless of other people’s rights or opinions.

“If ever a dastardly act stained the re-

cord of this State," he exclaimed one crisp winter's morning, as several men joined him in their walk to Judge Gould's lecture, "it is the blue-light trick of the Federalists on the night of December the 12th."

"You take a good deal for granted, Jackson." Peyton spoke in a decisive way not habitual to him.

"It makes no difference whether it was a Federalist or some of their sympathizers. It's characteristic of this State. New England is little better than a breeding-place of rebellion."

"I'm not a New Englander," — Gordon had a slow, measured style of speaking when aroused, — "but I don't" —

"Heavens, fellows, Gordon says he's not a New Englander! It's the first time I ever heard him give any information about himself."

"He's mightily unlike you in that respect," slyly observed one of the company.

"I'm not a New Englander" — Gordon repeated himself —

"Glad to hear it." This was Jackson's second interruption.

"But I like and respect New England, and I don't think any son of these sturdy, inde-

pendent States would connive with their enemies.”

A shout of approval drowned the captain’s reply.

“And *I’m* not a New Englander,” — it was Peyton speaking, — “but when you find an honester, manlier class of men, I wish you to mention the fact to me.”

“They’re stubborn, selfish, rebellious citizens. If any part of the country ought to be devastated by the British, it’s New England.”

“Say, Jackson, your wound must have affected your spleen.”

The conversation ended as the young gentlemen entered the lecture-room.

On the afternoon of the same day half a dozen of the students met at Gordon’s, among them Peyton and Jackson. Card-playing was one of the favorite diversions of this set, and occasionally small sums of money as stakes helped to foster an interest in the game.

Jackson was a spendthrift, — lavish in all his expenditures, — sometimes impecunious, at other times flush with money. It had been said that he played in order to settle his bills. Repeatedly the word passed among the students that this fellow and that was fleeced

out of every penny he carried with him. But Jackson, being shrewd and insinuating, generally came off first best.

At this period in his career luck seemed to have turned against him. The old facility at cards did not show itself. Perhaps his wound and the strain of warfare had shattered his judgment, or did fate take a strong hand in the contest?

During the game that followed, Decatur's failure came up again for discussion.

"As like as not it was some English emissary lurking in the neighborhood. We ought to have banished every man who failed to give a straightforward account of himself."

"You're inconsistent or fickle in your opinions, Jackson. This morning you were cursing the Federalists and calling them blue lights, and now you are laying the trick to the charge of the enemy." Peyton had a drawling speech when he hectored his friends.

"You must have an intelligent opinion on the subject, you and Gordon," — with a sudden increase of color on the part of the captain, — "tell us what you know about it. Being in New London at the time, you had a capital chance to post yourself." There was distrust — a hint of accusation in the speaker's manner.

Interest in the game, which had taken an unexpected turn, made a break in the talk. Every eye was centred on the cards. Suddenly Gordon and Peyton sprang to their feet, tossing away the bits of pasteboard, declaring that they were done for the day. Excitement prevailed, voices rang loud and high, angry looks being exchanged between Jackson and his opponents, while suppressed murmurs and maledictions surcharged the air.

“You ’ve loaned Jackson considerable money, have n’t you?” remarked Peyton, as he and Gordon sat before the blazing fire on the hearth an hour later.

“Yes,” was the answer, given with hesitation.

“One way to make a fellow your enemy is to load him down with favors. That’s the way kindness acts on some natures.”

“You ’ve done something in that line yourself, have n’t you, Peyton?”

“Oh, yes; several times when Jackson was hard pressed I’ve helped him bridge the difficulty. Before he went to the war he was particular to settle up these little obligations, but fighting on the field of battle seems to have impaired his memory. Does he ever pay you back what he borrows these days?”

"I can't recollect any such time," was the laconic reply.

"He lies so plausibly, or gets into a towering passion so quickly, that I have quit reminding him of his debts. I say, Gordon, begging your pardon for the remark, I used to think you were the mysterious person in my circle. For all I know, you may be a prince in disguise. But I vouch for your honor and manliness. Jackson, however, is a deeper mystery than you, and there is something about the spirit and action of the fellow that breeds foul suspicion in my mind. What say you?"

"It is n't necessary for me to say anything." Gordon spoke reflectively. "You've said enough."

"It amazes me that a good man like Colonel Tallmadge or Mr. David Hardy will stomach a youth like Jackson."

"Well, there's no accounting for tastes. The dash and glamour of soldiering always bewitches folks."

The young men were in the saddle every fine day, so that a ride to Fairfield came as a diversion, and these rides grew in frequency during the next few months. The sessions of the courts and a friendship for Mr. Roger

M. Sherman, one of the leading lawyers of the State, gave them an excuse for these delightful excursions.

It was on one of these trips that they were joined by Jackson himself, and the three men were guests at Knapp's tavern.

"There is no doubt in my mind" — Jackson was speaking for the benefit of a dozen loungers in the place — "that the blue lights were made by some skulking Englishman and his Federal friends. There's a party in New England — small party, I think — that would like to set up an independent confederacy or go back into colonial relations with the old country. Henry did n't manufacture his conspiracy out of whole cloth. He crept into the secrets of traitors."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Peyton. "No more traitors in New England than anywhere else. Don't set yourself up for the only patriot in the East because you've been to the war."

"Perhaps Mr. Jackson speaks with knowledge." There was a covert challenge in the expression of Gordon. "Modesty often restrains the gentleman of the West from making direct charges."

"If every man had his deserts, there would

be at least one less Englishman in Connecticut," answered Jackson.

"If every man had his deserts," — there was quiet force in the language of Gordon that had telling effect, — "some men, now running at large, would stand behind prison bars."

"Don't let war or politics inflame your passions this fine day," interrupted a venerable citizen, who noted the trend of the discussion. The entrance of David Hardy turned the current of talk into other channels.

CHAPTER VIII

A KETTLE OF TAR — A FEATHER-BED

IT was plain to Gordon that he had lost favor in town, for old acquaintances looked askance at him when he showed himself on the streets, and the tavern cronies with whom he had long jested in his frequent visits skulked away with the air of men who felt it a disgrace to be seen in his company.

“Peyton,” he remarked, on the morning following their appearance in Fairfield, “there’s a chill in the air. Has it struck into your vitals?” The day was happy with the glowing, generous life of early June.

“Gordon, I fear that it means mischief. Jackson has been talking with unbridled tongue.”

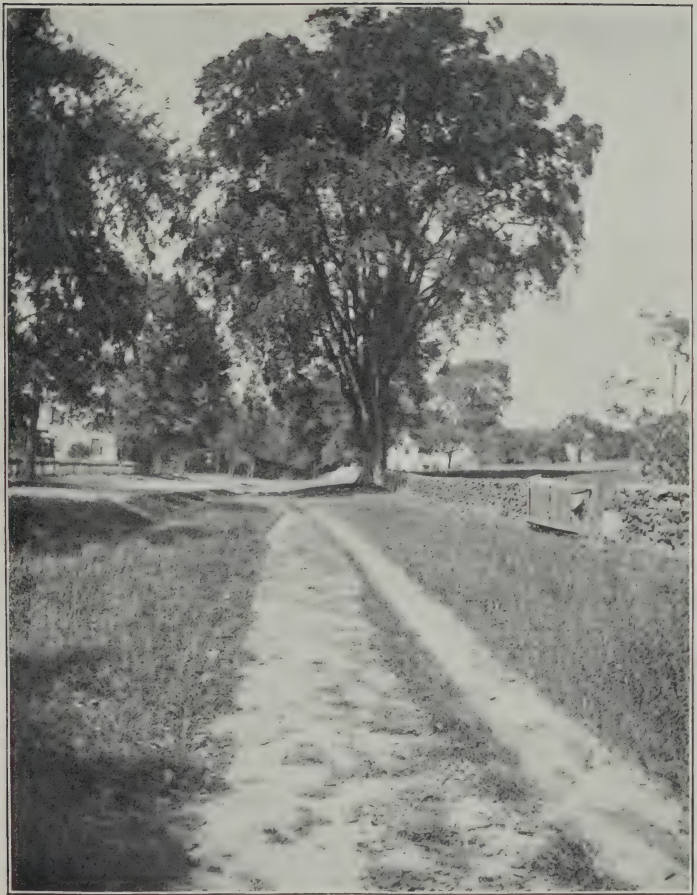
When the young men arrived at the tavern on the previous evening, all had been cordiality; but within an hour a change in the attitude of one and another man toward Gordon had been noted. This was the chill to which the speaker adverted.

But the atmosphere of the Hardy homestead remained serene and refreshing, so that the law students tarried hour after hour in the grateful shelter. They returned to the tavern for dinner and supper, but the large part of the day was devoted to a triangular courtship of the sisters.

Gordon and Peyton seemed to be on friendly terms with Jackson, listening with interest to his stories, joining affably in the discussion of public affairs, adding wit and jest to the brightness of the hour, doing all in their power to entertain the young ladies.

Uncle David stumbled upon the company several times in his search for misplaced books, finding his treasures in some mysterious nook where he had absent-mindedly dropped them. Bringing them back to his study, with the delight of a child holding a new toy, he would stand in his doorway and talk learnedly to the young people upon the subject that engrossed his attention, while they nodded assent or asked some relevant question, or tried to direct his thoughts into fields of common interest.

Little Davie spiced the gayety with numerous quaint remarks, darting in and out of the parlor like some frisky domestic animal, or



MILL PLAIN ELM

hiding behind the door or furniture, and suddenly emerging with a shout and a somersault. Several times he sounded a war-whoop as he sped through the house on the wings of the wind, afterwards stealing behind Jackson's chair to ask him if that was the way the Indian allies did it when they skirmished on the Western frontier.

Late in the day the company resorted to the shade of the back porch and the Virginia creeper, where the breath of summer lingered with sweet content. The birds haunted the shady yard; a short row of bee-hives in the distance accounted for the incessant hum of insects; there was a gush and melody of nature pervading the scene, truly enchanting. Clouds blew up from the east with the evening wind, and the mutterings of an approaching storm mingled with the whisperings of the trees. A keen observer would have noticed signs of restlessness in Jackson. There was a nervous twitching of his limbs, a peculiar alertness of hearing manifest, a frequent change of position, an occasional failure to push himself in conversation.

When they were driven indoors by the furious tempest, Mary moved about the room like one unnerved by the superabundance of

electrical fluid in the air. Several times she stood before the open window and gazed anxiously into the gloom, retreating with fear as fingers of fire traced strange pencilings against the blackness of night.

Uncle David stood by the candle on the mantelpiece and read portions of "The Tempest" aloud, to the accompaniment of the rising gale, the resounding surf, and the bellowing thunder.

"Why, child," said he to Mary, "you shake like one seized with a chill."

The rain was now pelting the house with vicious force, while the wild shrieks of the storm-fiends sounded human in their fury.

"It's the witches come back again," whispered little Davie, who had crept from his bed and was haunting Mrs. Randolph as she hastened through room after room to fasten the doors and the windows which the wind-spirits rattled and banged with all their might.

There was a slight abatement of the tempest after this first pitiless assault.

"Peyton," said Jackson, with a repressed show of purpose, "you promised to do me a friendly turn to-night. We must return to the tavern."

"Can't you wait?"

“We must go now” — spoken with decision. “It will take two good hours to get through the case, and I must hasten to New York in the morning.”

There was a bored look upon the face of Peyton. He did not esteem it a matter of importance, yet for the sake of his promise he must go.

“Well, the ladies will doubtless be glad to excuse us.”

The students arose, Jackson and Peyton bidding their friends good-evening.

“You’ll come with us?” Peyton turned to Gordon as he spoke.

“As this is a private affair between you two boys, and as the storm has not passed, I will remain, with the kind permission of our friends.”

“Do!” exclaimed Mr. Hardy, the desire being echoed by Mrs. Randolph and Miss Martha.

“But it is such a dark, dreadful night,” interposed Mary; “and you will — you will — find it a lonely walk” —

“What! will you thrust me into the storm” — spoken with jocularly — “whether or no?”

“Oh, sir, you jest,” was Mary’s reply; the

two young men were leaving the house as she stepped over by Gordon's side; "but I think it would be quite as well for you to go."

"Why, Mary Randolph," exclaimed Martha, "what a rude speech! You will stay, will you not, Mr. Gordon?"

"Sheer obstinacy would force me to stay. I'm not to be put down by such a remark."

He looked his smiling defiance, and quietly seated himself by the side of Martha, while the elder sister left the room.

"I take delight in a storm."

"Mary's always afraid when it thunders. She's the bravest girl I ever knew in the place of trial or danger. I believe she could go upon a field of battle and attend to the wounded and dying, and never flinch; but if a thunderstorm blew up, as like as not she'd faint away."

"I've heard of girls possessing marvelous courage, who were invariably frightened out of their wits by a mouse."

"It's the electricity that affects her, I suppose. Now I never like to get a drenching, but a grand, boisterous, old-fashioned tempest is my delight."

The winds multiplied their fury, and again the rain beat sharply, spitefully, against the house.

A half hour later four men clad in sailor toggery, with abundance of waterproof covering, lurked under the trees in the Hardy dooryard. What could drive any human being into such a storm except it was stern necessity?

A long, rough hour passed, the liers-in-wait hardly shifting their position. It was plain that such close watch boded ill, for surely well-intentioned men would never haunt the home of an honorable and beloved citizen like David Hardy.

At last the storm settled down into a steady, fertile rain, and the hour was late for simple country people.

“Good-night,” said Gordon cheerily. He was hand-shaking with Mr. Hardy, the sisters standing near the door, through which he was to pass into the little entry.

Another moment and a man emerged from the front door, walking briskly down the narrow path, brushing against the wet shrubbery, stepping into the deep pools of water, indifferent to rain, mud, darkness.

At the same time a second person emerged from the house, passing through the rear porch, across the back yard, over to the small meadow, into Mr. Sherman’s garden. This

individual was unmolested, and having skirted the place, made his way to the front door of the lawyer's house, where he fastened a note to the knocker and then hastened to the tavern.

But the other individual, whose exit from the Hardy door has been noted, did not fare so well. He had gained the street and turned to the east, when the four skulkers made a dash for him. A keen observer might have suspected that the solitary walker was not altogether unprepared for the sudden onset, although he yielded to his captors after a brief struggle. It was so quickly and quietly done, — this seizing of their victim, — and the steady patter of the rain, with the distant murmuring of thunder and the sighing of the pines, made such a distraction, that it would have been well-nigh impossible for people to hear if the prisoner had tried to arouse the neighbors. But the man was hustled away through the darkness so that he soon passed beyond the limits of houses and was lost in the dreariness of open land.

“Strike a blue light, my hearty,” said a gruff voice, evidently addressing the captive.

This was the first word spoken by the sailor quartette, and it was followed by mumbled curses.

“Have you gagged the devil yet,” whispered one of the brawny crew.

“We must wait until we get further from the village,” was the reply.

They traveled along in silence.

“We’ll give you a dose that will make you think of your mother.” One of his captors spoke to the prisoner as he stumbled and half fell over a fresh stump in the field.

“Boys,” — it was the leader, — “all you have to do is to think of the thousands of poor American lads and men that have been snatched from home and country by English oppressors and impressed into the service of our hated foe, — then give this fellow hell.”

The sentiment brought down a storm of blasphemy upon the head of the silent man.

“It’s a little early in the season for a man to put on winter clothes, but you’ll pardon us, I’m sure.” The tone of satire was distinct above the noise of the storm.

“’T is n’t too early for feathering out,” remarked another jester.

“I’ll tell you there’s nothing like tar and feathers for a renegade Britisher.”

“I believe he’s a blanked spy.” The leader hit the fellow a telling blow in the face, evidently unable longer to hold in check the stormy passions rising within him.

The blow was a signal for action. They had pushed their man through the fields until they came near a hut in which was a roaring fire, by the light of which a kettle of tar and a feather-bed appeared. The tar and the feathers were to be transferred to Gordon. He was the fellow against whom their maledictions were hurled. He was said to be one of the scoundrels who had set off blue lights in the borders of New London and warned the British blockaders of Decatur's coming. He was the victim to be sacrificed to the vengeful, bitter feelings of a party who hated England with an intensity unmitigated by a single throb of compassion or brotherhood.

To the surprise of the leader, the man whom they had hurriedly bound and proposed to gag — the man who had submitted to their rough usage with a brief show of resistance — now made a counter-charge against them, broke asunder the cords which held him, struck right and left with a force and a facility almost superhuman, and then sprang into the darkness.

All was confusion and excitement. Instant pursuit was given. They were near him — they touched him in their flight; he darted

to one side and tripped them. Again they lost their man, and then they heard a mocking voice chasing them through the gloom.

“Who’s that?” shouted the leader.

There came a familiar laugh stealing amid the rain.

“I swear,” exclaimed the leader, “it sounds like old Sambo!”

The victim had disappeared, and all search was unavailing.

“Heavens, boys!” — it was the strong man of the party talking as they entered the hut, where the kettle of tar was, to their amazement, turned bottom side up, and the feather-bed inside out, so that the place was thick with the downy objects drifting hither and thither on the cross-currents of the wind, — “Heavens, boys, he was a very giant in strength, and — why, the devil — I believe he’s set the tar and the feathers topsy turvy.”

It was June’s sweetest morning after the storm had swept westward in its way. Jackson arose with the birds, leaving his fellow students undisturbed, making an early start for New York.

Gordon and Peyton had not come downstairs before little Davie was racing through

the tavern, knocking and shouting for them to get up and hear the birds sing.

“Why, my youngster,” — Gordon opened his door and admitted the child to his chamber, — “you ’re as lively as a cricket this morning. What ’s up?”

“I ’m up,” was the quick reply. “I guess I know a thing or two — Mary ’n’ I.”

“No doubt about it.” The genial light of Gordon’s handsome eyes diffused a very opulence of friendliness. “What is it that you know this morning? I can see that you ’re weighted down with news.”

The child laughed merrily, boisterously, and skipped about the room like a bird hopping from branch to branch in sheer excess of good spirits.

“Have a good sleep last night?”

“Slept like a top, my man.” Gordon was already infected by the child’s contagious happiness.

“I should n’t wonder if some folks did n’t sleep.” Davie assumed a very wise appearance.

“Folks afraid of thunder and lightning?” The gentleman was thinking of Mary Randolph when he put the question, and his face showed marks of concern.

“Bad folks; folks that try to cut up capers — and — Sambo.”

“If you were n’t so blithe and merry, my young friend, I should think that something must have happened over at your house last night. If you’ve any news for me, pass it over.”

But the news-carrier was in a mood to tantalize the gentleman, although it became evident that he was bursting with a desire to tell it.

Gordon started in pursuit of the boy, chasing him around the table and behind the bed and through the door into the hallway, but Davie was too quick for him.

“Sambo got hurt last night.” The child had returned to the bedroom, and Gordon was putting the last touches to his morning toilet.

“Who hurt him?”

“They tried to tar and feather him.” Davie threw himself on the bed and rolled over it with convulsions of laughter.

“They thought” — the child lowered his voice and spoke with sudden sobriety and indignation of tone — “they thought it was *you*.”

A curious expression came over Gordon’s

face. He stood gazing upon the boy with astonishment.

“They — thought — it — was — me,” repeating the words slowly. “*Who* thought so?”

“Mary ’n’ I know all about it. I’ll tell you a secret. Somebody hates you and wants to kill you, I think. And so last night four men watched our house, and when they thought you came out the front door they swooped down and caught” — here the child stopped and broke into peals of wild laughter — “and caught — and caught Sambo.”

Wonder, indignation, bewilderment, came to the surface in the man’s eyes.

“Somebody says you made the blue lights off the shore of New London,” — Davie waited a moment to master his rising anger, — “but it’s a lie, I know it’s a lie, cuz you love us, don’t you, Gordon?” From laughter to tears — from towering wrath to sweetest confidence — the child was passing in a moment. He looked straight into the soul of the man to whom he gave his allegiance. “You would n’t play such a nasty trick. You’re a gentleman, and we all know it.” The little fellow ran across the room to the strong, grave, silent man, sprang into the

chair near which he was standing, and flinging his arms around his neck, kissed him and burst into a passion of tears.

Oh, the joy, the sacredness, the saving virtue of a child's faith in his friend!

The man kissed the boy with infinite tenderness and affection.

“And they hurried Sambo off to the old hut,” — Davie had lifted his head and was standing on the chair, with one arm resting against the man's shoulder, — “and when they tried to gag him, Sambo hit 'em right and left,” — all the vivacity and merriment of the child had returned, — “and did n't he make it lively for 'em? And then Sambo got away and ran in the dark to the hut, and tipped the kettle of tar over, and ripped open the feather-bed so's the feathers flew every which way; and then he came home.”

The child clapped his hands, and made the room echo his laughter.

“Is Sambo really hurt?”

Gordon was sober and thoughtful as he asked the question.

“Oh, nothing but a few scratches and a black eye. You just come over and hear him tell about it. But it's a secret, you know. Mary 'n' you 'n' I know it. Nobody else.”

Davie sprang down from the chair and danced about the room with the friskiness of a colt, while his companion stood absorbed in questionings and reflections.

“Why don’t you ask how it was they took Sambo?”

“Yes, Davie,” said Gordon with enkindled interest in his narrative, “how was it that they seized Sambo instead of me?”

“I’ll tell you all about it, but Mary tried to make me promise not to.” The fire shone in the child’s eyes. “I heard some men whispering last evening in the tavern barn. It was dark so they did n’t see me. They were hired to catch you and give you a coat of tar and feathers, and they went over to our house to watch. So I told Mary; and when Captain Jackson and Mr. Peyton went back to the tavern, Mary tried to make you go with them, for she did n’t think anybody would pitch on to you three men.” Gordon was observing the boy with a curious intensity of expression. “But you would n’t go. Then Mary ran and found Sambo, and told him to get ready to go out on an errand for her; and she told him that some men might try to hurt him, but he could lick ’em, only he was n’t to speak until he could n’t help it.

And then ” — Davie waited a moment and lowered his voice — “ when you were all ready to leave, she sent you out through the back way with a note to Mr. Sherman, while Sambo went out the front door ; and they took him before he cleared the gate, and they thought it was you all the time.”

The boy laughed again, with all the mirthful abandon of childhood, while the man remained grave.

The interview was broken by Peyton’s entrance.

“ Is it you, Davie, making all this noise and disturbing everybody with your hilarity ? ” The gentleman’s mocking tone betrayed him.

“ My white hen hatched half her eggs ; the rest of them were struck by lightning, and I’m going to throw them away.” The child darted downstairs, and the two friends hastened after him.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH FOUR LINES MAKE TROUBLE

“THEY ’RE here, and they ’re going to live at the tavern. Hurrah for Gordon and Peyton !”

It was little Davie announcing the arrival of the young gentlemen from Litchfield.

“You ought to see the stuff they ’ve brought with them, — boxes and trunks and guns and fishing-tackle and books and bear-skins and such beautiful antlers and everything under the sun. Won’t we have fun? They ’re gentlemen, both of them, but Jackson is a Democrat.” The willful child still clung to his profane spelling of the latter word.

“Well, child,” — Martha was speaking, — “a stranger would think that these men were your boon companions” —

“They are !” exclaimed Davie stoutly. “Don’t we go off in the woods and on the water together? Can’t I shoot a rifle when they give me a chance, or haul in a fish as

well as Mr. Gordon himself?" The boy's eyes flashed with enthusiasm. "Oh, we'll have a jolly time this summer, even if there is war, and the British ships steal along the shore."

Davie stated a fact when he claimed the two men for his intimate friends. It was a pleasant sight, — the three engaged in some animated discussion, or taking part in jovial sport, or giving close attention to one and another task set them by the young ladies at home. Few men showed keener wit or a brighter spirit than Davie. Vexatious to the last degree, he was still the honest, loving, ingenuous child, gifted with extraordinary insight and sensitiveness, intensely loyal to the right, free-hearted and merry as a bird.

The stage-coach had come, bringing the mail from New York, and the postmaster was examining the letters and papers as he distributed them. It was the exciting hour of the day, and an expectant company thronged the room.

"Here's a letter for Mr. Roger M. Sherman, — very clear, bold handwriting. Ah, there you are, Mr. Sherman, all ready to take it, ain't ye?"

As the letter was passed over to the lawyer, every person along the way gazed upon

it in order that he might verify the postmaster's description of the chirography.

"The Reverend Heman Humphrey," — Mr. Postmaster looked curiously at the missive. "I wonder if it's a meeting of Conso- ciation that's called? Oh, there you are, are ye?" looking toward the front door where Mr. Humphrey stood. "I expect it's a letter about this intemperance question. Let us know, Mr. Humphrey, if there's any news?"

This letter was handed to the minister after being subjected to the same critical examination on the part of every person through whose hands it passed.

"Mr. David Hardy. A letter from Colonel Tallmadge. I always know his writing. I'll wager my old hat that there's a spoon-like curved line caught on to the 'B' in his signature, and a final upward twist to the last 'e' in his name. Where's uncle David? Anybody seen him to-day?"

"I'll take it," piped up the sweet, bold voice of little Davie.

"Yes, it's from Litchfield," observed one of the loungers, as he held the letter long enough to satisfy himself concerning the postmark. "It must be from the colonel."

"Eh?" exclaimed the postmaster with dis-

gust. "Think I don't know, do ye, and have to wait for your opinion?" Slowly the letter made its way to the child.

"Captain Jackson," continued the official. "I s'pose I'll have to keep it until he calls for it, — left yist'day morning. I declare it's from some place in Kentucky. Seems to me I've heard he lives out in them parts when he's home, — looks so 's it had been through fire and water. He's a high-spirited fellow, that Captain Jackson. He'll be back in the war before long."

"Does n't look like a Westerner, does he? Must get his clothes in New York," remarked the small man back in the corner. "Folks say he's a great friend of Aaron Burr."

"Ah, here's a letter for me." The postmaster's face lighted up with fresh interest. "Who in the world can it be from?" He turned it over and over, eyeing it with suspicion and curiosity. "I declare if it ain't from Washington." He began to break the seal, oblivious of the fact that other people were waiting for their mail. "No," he continued, "I won't read it now. It'll take too long. But who has written to me from Washington? I don't know anybody there."

"This letter" — laying down the one ad-

dressed to himself and picking up another — “is for Mr. Marshall Peyton. And it’s a woman wrote it, I know, by the size and shape of the letters. Ain’t they pritty? It’s from old Virginny,” — gazing around the room for the gentleman to whom it belonged. “Very likely it’s good news from home. Anybody seen Mr. Peyton since breakfast?”

“I know where you’ll find him,” answered a lad of fifteen, one of the academy boys; “he’s a-courting the Randolph girls.”

“What do you know about it?” It was the indignant voice of little Davie. “He’s a-fishing and a-hunting and a-swimming with me and Mr. Gordon.”

Hearty laughter greeted this repartee.

“Miss Mary Randolph,” read the post-master. “I think I’ve seen the writing of Captain Jackson often enough to know it. If I’m not mistaken, this letter’s from him. Queer, too, for he has n’t been gone but a day or two. It must be something very important. Here, Davie, will you take this letter of Captain Jackson’s to your sister?”

As it was handed to the boy he regarded the small packet with noticeable disfavor, shoving it carelessly into his pocket, while he whistled a refrain from a comic song of the day.

“Here’s a letter for Mr. Murray Gordon — very peculiar writing — must be an old person wrote it, a man I should say, and — the deuce!” exclaimed the startled postmaster, hesitating and turning red in the face as he proceeded — “it’s from England!” He wiped the sweat from his brow and looked upon the company with anxiety.

“I’ll take it, if you please,” said Davie, with firm voice. “He told me to bring his mail to him. We’re — we’re going to take a horseback ride into the country together.”

There were nods and winks and smiles to be observed as the boy made this remark and hastened from the room.

“They say that Gordon is one of the men who signaled with blue lights off the shore of New London last December.”

“I’ve heard that report before,” answered the postmaster, gazing with a severe expression into the eyes of the man who spoke, “and I don’t believe a word of it. He may be from England and he may be from the ends of the earth, I don’t know; but wherever he’s from, and whoever he is, I’ll stake my honor on his being a square man.”

The postmaster was a person of influence in town, and his word went far with many of his fellow citizens.

“ Well, I guess he come near being tarred and feathered, by what I hear.”

“ And a shameful thing it was,” continued the postmaster, with a magisterial air.

All this time he was fumbling a letter, while his fellow citizens awaited his convenience with patient goodwill.

“ The Honorable Lewis B. Sturges.” The name was rolled out with prolonged emphasis. “ Is our member of Congress present? This must be business of state. See how big and thick the package is.”

• “ It ’s my opinion ” — there was a quiet, subdued underflow of talk during the distribution of the mail — “ that Commodore Decatur was mistaken about the blue lights, and a great injustice has been done this State.” It was the physician who expressed his mind.

“ And it is my opinion,” said one of the Burrs, “ that the fellows who tried to tar and feather Mr. Gordon ought to be tarred and feathered themselves.”

The law student was evidently regaining popular favor.

“ And it ’s my opinion ” — a new voice was now contributed to the talk — “ that Connecticut will go to the dogs unless the war

soon ends and we get a chance to revive our trade and commerce."

So the conversation continued, while Mr. Postmaster called out the names of the lucky receivers of mail-matter, and made his characteristic remarks upon the letters or papers which he slowly distributed.

Davie carried his mail stuff to the homestead, and then set off on horseback with Gordon and Peyton. It was a little trip into the hill country, planned for his special pleasure.

They were resting under the trees a dozen or fifteen miles from home, and the boy was amusing them with his antics.

"You see," he said, "Captain Jackson was sweeter than honey. I knew something was to pay, so I kept my eye on him. Well, the last evening, he said he had a gold dollar for me if I'd sing, and I was singing in less than a minute. Here's the dollar," pulling the coin from a little bag made of a pig's bladder. "It's good, is n't it?" While the men examined it, the boy continued: "Then I went to bed, but I did n't feel sleepy, and bimeby I tied a piece of red cloth about my head and wrapped myself in a red bed-quilt and jumped on a broomstick and pranced into the parlor, and it was just in the nick of

time, for Martha'd gone out, and Uncle David did n't hear anything, and Jackson was a-saying something that scared Mary, for she was white as a sheet and sat as still as a mouse. He was standing right by her side, looking down like a hawk ready to pounce upon a chicken." The boy's hearers were absorbed in his rapid story. "When I sprang into the room, something tripped me, you know, and I struck the captain straight in the knees, and then we toppled over a chair, and Uncle David waked up and blew the light out; and did n't we have fun?"

Gordon and Peyton were laughing heartily.

"I heard Mary crying after the girls went to bed. I should n't wonder if he said something to hurt her feelings. I don't like Jackson. Do you?" He lifted his eyes inquiringly, but no answer was given. Flinging himself down on the soft mossy bed, the boy soon dropped asleep.

Peyton was the one to break the long silence. "Gordon, we must look out for breakers."

"Well, my friend," was the reply, "we've always been able to take care of ourselves, and I see no reason for fretting over the future. Evidently the captain did n't find life quite to

his satisfaction, or he would not have left town so abruptly."

"Oh, he'll come back soon enough. Of course it was Jackson who hired those fellows to try the tar and feather trick. That little chap," pointing to the slumbering Davie, "is about as bright as they make them. I'd much rather have him for my friend than my foe."

"Ah, Davie is a royal soul, Peyton. He has a good deal more of the man in him than of the boy."

There followed busy days for the gentlemen. They were to read a certain portion of the time, and then learn to copy briefs, and do the office work, which would make them familiar with legal procedure in Connecticut.

Davie was a person also that had to be considered, for he claimed his friends every day, inventing the most ingenious excuses for dragging them to the shore or the woods or the trout brooks.

The long, delicious evenings were devoted to the ladies.

Jackson returned to Fairfield early in July. His relations with his two fellow students seemed strained, yet there was no open break,

and he spent his time with them or the sisters.

“Come, Peyton,” — it was a languid, poetic twilight of a long summer’s day, — “recite those verses on the awakening of spring which you’ve been writing.” Jackson’s tone was one of indifferent persuasion. “It’s wicked to hide your light under a bushel.”

“What do you know about my verses?” spoken with asperity, revealing the sensitiveness of the poet.

“Well, if you are not willing to favor the company,” — the girls, with Davie and the three young gentlemen, were seated on the rear porch of the homestead, — “I’ll recite them myself. Writers of songs are proverbially modest, we know.”

“Oh, we should love to hear the verses. He’s half promised to read us something a score of times.”

“You shall have your wish gratified.” Jackson turned to Miss Mary as he arose in the dim light and cleared his voice for the recitation.

Peyton was regarding him suspiciously, for how did Jackson know that he had written a poem on spring, or who would dare steal his rhymes?

“A common, mighty impulse moves
Earth’s heedful, patient, joyous spirit;
The sympathetic ear can hear it, —
This labor song of fields and groves.”

Jackson recited the lines, rapidly, yet with fine expression.

“And, pray, sir,” — Peyton sprang to his feet, — “how came you into possession of my verses?” There was a peculiar tremor in his words; the dim light concealed his face so that observers did not see the flash of anger.

“I think they are beautiful, Mr. Peyton. Did you really write them?”

“Yes,” was the sweet comment of Martha, “there is the true ring of poetry in them. Why have you never read us a single verse?”

The good opinion of the ladies evidently calmed the ruffled feelings of the poet; still he pressed his question.

“You will please to explain, Captain Jackson, how you procured my verses.”

“Is that a command or a request?” was the captain’s mellifluous reply.

Evidently he wished to annoy Peyton.

“Take it as you please.”

“Oh, I am sure that Captain Jackson must have heard you repeat them to yourself,”

interposed Mary gently. Her keen mind had discovered that the best of feeling did not exist between the gentlemen, and she would avoid if possible the threatened rupture.

“Miss Mary, you are always right.” Jackson addressed the lady with all the gracious deference and sincere homage of his nature. “Our rooms at the tavern are so near together that I often hear my sentimental friend exercising his genius. I’ll candidly say that the verses I have repeated struck my fancy. I was strongly tempted to write them down and give them into your keeping.”

“If I was in your place, captain,” — Gordon now made his first contribution to the strife, — “I’d do the poet the courtesy of asking his permission the next time.”

“I’ve no doubt you would,” was the reply; “but I generally do much as I please without consultation with Mr. Gordon or Mr. Peyton.”

“Let us sit within doors,” exclaimed Mary, rising and leading the way to the parlor.

“I call a fellow a thief that steals another’s thoughts or songs,” whispered Gordon to Peyton.

Captain Jackson heard the remark, and looked his defiance as they drew near the light.

CHAPTER X

PISTOLS AND TEN FULL PACES

It had been the custom of the young men to sit down to a game of cards on their return from the Hardys'. The stakes were generally small, the purpose being to spice their amusement.

It was three nights after the episode of the verses that Jackson, Peyton, Gordon, and Dana, one of the later students from the law school, resorted to what they sometimes called their nightcap game. The room in which they played was remote from other sleeping-rooms, and the winds blew a gale, so that they had no fear of disturbing any neighboring sleeper. The stakes had been high from the beginning, Jackson pocketing the money.

Peyton and the comrade from Litchfield were excited, and played with poor judgment. Jackson showed great nerve, evidently master of the situation. Gordon was cool and watchful, his eyes bent on the manipulations of the captain.

Politics frequently interrupted the game, — Jackson making several cutting remarks upon the Federalists, viciously trying to kindle the anger of his opponents.

“ They ’re a lot of traitors, these New England aristocrats. They ’ll be advocating a confederacy of their own, one of these days. War touches them in their most vulnerable part — the pocket.”

“ I don’t know that they love money any better than the representatives of the Southwest whom I ’ve met in Connecticut,” was the spirited answer of the Virginian.

“ That ’s a home thrust,” said Jackson sarcastically.

Gordon was quietly, intently following the movements of the man from the Ohio.

“ In my opinion, the whole Federalist party is honeycombed with disloyalty,” — rounding out the sentence with an oath; “ and I ’ve no doubt that England has a full quota of minions in this country, — men who are playing the spy, and seeking to destroy the Union.” The silence which followed was broken by the same voice. “ In fact,” and the face of Jackson expressed more than his words, “ I’ll bet what money I can raise within the next twenty-four hours that we

might name at least one of these contemptible devils."

"Put up any sum you please," — Gordon was calm and direct in his speech, — "and I'll meet you."

The game had become intense in its fascination, the stakes being doubled and trebled. Jackson's mind now centred on the playing, and silence prevailed.

Then Gordon sprang to his feet and flung the cards upon the table.

"Jackson," said he, speaking with deliberation and point-blank charge, "you're a cheat and a blackleg."

The other men were on their feet in a second.

Wild and cruel shrieked the eastern winds as they rattled the windows and shook the trees, fitting accompaniment to the storm of passions rioting in the breasts of the men.

"You lie!" shouted Jackson, with an oath. "You sly dog of a British spy, you infernal plotter of evil, you scum, you dregs, you sleek-faced imp of hell, — how I hate you!"

The fury of his curses passed all imagining.

Gordon was now touched in his most sensitive place, for honor was impeached. Slow

to give way to wrath, he was a frightful example of its horrors when finally aroused.

The two players glared at one another for a moment, and then a common impulse drove them together.

“Men, men,” exclaimed Peyton, realizing their predicament, and rushing between the combatants, “I beg of you to stop. This is no time or place to settle quarrels.”

Gordon regained his self-possession, while Dana reasoned with Jackson.

Sweeping the stakes into his pockets, and still flaming with a passion that was little short of diabolic, the captain withdrew under the strong pressure of his friend.

“You will hear from me in the morning,” he screamed above the rough, shrill, mocking voices of the gale, giving Gordon a parting look of venomous hatred.

“Yes, I suppose it will be a challenge to a duel,” was the answer to a question put by Peyton a half hour later.

“The fellow is n’t worth a duel. He ought to be in prison.”

“I know it, but what can a man do under the circumstances?” Gordon was self-possessed and matter-of-fact.

“But think of the excitement it will create

in case anything comes of it. The country has been ringing with tirades against the practice ever since Burr shot Hamilton. Dr. Nott, Mr. Beecher, and other public men have turned the current of public opinion into strong disapproval. I verily believe we'd be driven from the State, if we had any part in a duel here. And you know how Colonel Tallmadge and uncle David Hardy have talked and talked until they count us converts to their faith. I tell you, Gordon, if Jackson challenges you, we shall be in a pretty pickle."

The sun was heralding the new day before the young men sought their short hour of sleep.

A little before noon, Jackson's comrade brought the expected challenge. It was evident that the captain had Colonel Burr in mind. Taking him as pattern, he was seeking the satisfaction which he believed would clear the way for a successful courtship, and at the same time vindicate his honor.

True, Gordon had the name of being a good shot, and he was a fellow of remarkable nerve; still, Jackson thought himself the superior of his antagonist, so that he was confident in his purpose.

There was considerable correspondence over the affair, stretching through several days; but it was plain that no adjustment could be reached other than by this appeal to the arbitrament of destiny.

Jackson continued his visits to the girls, meeting both Gordon and Peyton at their house. But it was little Davie who discovered that something had happened so that the gentlemen stood on a different footing with each other. He was one always sniffing fun or mischief, and the conviction grew strong in his young, vigorous mind that mischief — not fun — was brewing. In spite of his watch and suspicion, however, the child was not able to unravel the mystery.

“I tell you, Mary,” observed the young sage, “There’s bad blood between Mr. Gordon and Captain Jackson. I see it all the time.”

“Davie, I sometimes fear there’s not the best of feeling on their part. We must try to heal the breach and make them friends again.”

“But I don’t like Jackson, and I don’t believe you do. Why don’t you get rid of him? Tell him to go back to the war.”

“What old talk for a young head,” was

Mary's reply. "Child, do you think I'm like the centurion, who simply had to say to one soldier 'Go,' and he goeth, and to another 'Come,' and he cometh?"

"Mary," the boy whispered in a confidential way, "what should we do if anything happened to Gordon or — Peyton," adding the last name as a sort of appendix or supplement to the first.

What Davie had said was indefinite, — guess-work on his part, yet it disquieted Mary Randolph.

"I return to New York on urgent business to-morrow," said Jackson, the last evening that he tarried with the young ladies.

"And we shall follow in a day or two," remarked Peyton jocosely. But the jestful manner lacked genuineness.

Jackson was singularly fervent in his adieus.

Gordon and Peyton prolonged their stay for half an hour, and then returned to the tavern.

The next evening they remained with the sisters until a late hour, paying them unusual courtesies, diverting their minds with the freshest wit of the day, abounding in gossip, anecdote, and jollity. Little Davie sat with

them until he fell asleep through sheer exhaustion, crying the next morning when he learned that they had gone away at an early hour, and the good-by all unspoken.

The City Hotel in New York was their rendezvous; there Peyton was to arrange the last details of the duel.

“I don’t believe in this way of settling quarrels or vindicating a man’s honor.” Peyton was dispirited and uneasy as he spoke. “I’ve been reared among people that made dueling a common practice, and I never questioned the right of it until I met Colonel Tallmadge and Mr. Beecher, but now it goes against my conscience and judgment. I wish we could devise an honorable way out of the horrible nightmare.”

“Peyton, we must give Jackson his chance to get rid of a foe. It’s fate. I’ve known for weeks — months — that it was bound to come.”

Captain Jackson, imitating the example of Colonel Burr, wished to cross over to the Jersey shore, and Gordon was familiar with a lonely spot on the edge of the Bay, — one that might be reached with comparative ease, and would afford them the security desired.

In two parties they made their way to this

place early on the morning of the second day after their arrival in the city.

Gordon had arranged his affairs, and now was prepared to face the worst. Serene in aspect, he talked to Peyton as they crossed to the Jersey shore like a man engaged in some ordinary task. Not that he failed to measure the peril before him, or that he felt sure in respect to the end. Gordon's was a deep, rich nature, whose surface only partially revealed the great stores of manhood's finest treasures. The glow of a strong and manifold life was discernible in his dark, serious eyes, but never a hint of dread, anxiety, or disquiet appeared.

"If Jackson rids himself of a rival to-day," — Gordon's tone was that of a man discussing crops, ships, music, or any timely subject, — "don't think that you are to take up cudgels in behalf of a fallen comrade."

There was a strange, sudden griping in Peyton's throat, so that he made no reply.

"Whatever happens," — the spirit throbbed in Gordon's words, — "I want you to know that in my opinion a truer, manlier friend never breathed the breath of life than the one now by my side."

Peyton's eyes filled with tears as he seized

his comrade's hand, but he was so agitated that words refused to come.

“Jackson is a scoundrel. I have been piecing things together in my mind, and I am convinced that he was the master spirit in most of the chicanery known to us since we came to Litchfield. Nevertheless, I stand by what I said to you some months ago, — there's some good in the fellow.”

The vigor with which Gordon spoke ruffled the man's customary tranquillity.

“Gordon, you've always been a mystery to us. We don't know where you came from” — Peyton hesitated, as a fresh thought interrupted the train he was pursuing, and he changed his tone, saying parenthetically, “but I'm very sure where you're going to, if you go out of this world;” then he continued, — “but this one thing I will say, I'd trust you to the ends of the earth. I'd trust you with everything most sacred to me, old fellow,” — there was infinite affection in the words, — “I'd trust you as Jonathan trusted David.”

Deep silence followed, language failing in certain tender offices.

It was worth fire and sword, this friendship love.

“And there’s little Davie;” Gordon bent his head much as if the boy was walking by his side and he would speak to him. “Ah, Peyton, he’s a choice soul, full of the devil, everybody says, but you and I know that he has the making of as grand a man as ever trod the soil of his State. How I love the child! Peyton, I have two brothers,” — this was the first bit of family confidence which Gordon had ever reposed in his comrade, — “but I’ve never felt a brother’s love in my soul until I learned to love Davie — and — you.” There was a telltale pause. “I’m like the homesick boy,” — a whimsical expression flitted across Gordon’s face, — “who longed to be in his father’s stables so that he could run into the house and see his mother; I long to be with little Davie, so that I can run into the house and see the rest of the folks.” Both the men broke into a gentle, kindly laugh as a relief to their pent-up emotions.

When they reached the secluded ground, Jackson, his second, and a surgeon awaited them.

The captain was polite and guarded, yet his manner showed strong excitement. The fell purpose which he cherished had inflamed

all the wild passions of the man so that a very demon of fury seemed to possess him.

They were to use pistols.

The seconds measured off the distance, ten full paces, and then lots were cast for the choice of positions. The choice fell to Gordon, who naturally took the place which gave him the advantage of the sun over the right shoulder. Jackson ground his teeth with rage.

A lot was also cast to determine who should give the word, and this choice came to the captain.

The pistols were loaded in each other's presence, and the men took their places.

It was a superb, cloudless morning, the fresh breezes striking across the island from the sea.

The rules governing their procedure were read, the men holding their weapons in readiness for the fatal word.

"Are you prepared?" asked Jackson's second.

"Yes," was the reply.

"Present."

They presented, and fired almost simultaneously.

As the wind cleared away the smoke, Jack-

son spoke in an undertone to his second, raising his hand to the right ear, from which trickled a few drops of blood.

Gordon stood in his position a few seconds, then reeled, and fell upon his face.

“Curse him! curse him!” muttered Jackson, his face contorted with passion, as he turned again to his second and hastened with him from the field to their boat moored a little distance away.

The surgeon ran to Gordon, by whose side Peyton had already knelt.

The wounded man was placed upon his back and examined. The ball had evidently been aimed at the heart, but it struck above that organ, lodging in the left lung.

Taking the sufferer down to his boat, restoratives being applied, he soon regained consciousness, but who could say what might be the result? Gordon was a man in perfect health, robust of constitution, and strong willed. There was hope for him, and everything which good care, a devoted friend, and the science of the day might accomplish would be done.

They carried the wounded man to his room in the City Hotel. Time alone was to reveal the end.

CHAPTER XI

DAVIE SINGS FOR THE CAPTAIN

CAPTAIN JACKSON believed that he had given Gordon a mortal wound. Hurrying back to the city, he sprang upon his steed and galloped toward Fairfield. At Rye he changed horses and pushed forward with fresh vigor.

“Gordon has no family or intimate friends,” reasoned the captain. “He will linger a few hours or a day or two, and Peyton will take charge of him. The duel will be kept a secret. Now is the chance to win my heart’s love and get pledges from that pure soul.”

So the man knocked at the Hardy mansion, late on the evening of this fateful day.

“Why, Captain Jackson, when did you leave New York?” was the greeting of Mary, as the young man entered the parlor.

“This morning,” was the answer. “I jumped from one charger to another in Rye, so that I made the trip in easy jaunts.”

“And where are the other gentlemen?”

“They have business which detains them.” Never a shadow of fear or remorse crept into his face.

“Where did you see Mr. Gordon last?” Little Davie was inquisitive, for the swift and unexplained departure of his friends had grieved him.

“Well, he and Peyton went on an excursion into Jersey this morning. I saw them crossing the river. They like to have a good time, you know, and dip into life when they get a chance.” The words lacked heartiness, but that might be explained by the fact that Jackson was jealous.

“I’ve a great secret to tell you,” said Jackson a half hour later. He was talking in a confidential way to Mary.

“Is it about Gordon?” inquired Davie, whose ears seemed preternaturally sharp. He had been reading *Pilgrim’s Progress* when Jackson spoke in an undertone to his sister.

The young man, annoyed by the child, was forced to make the best of the situation and commit his secret to the ears of Davie and the rest of the family.

“I’ve been pressed to return to the army and go to the Southwest.”

“And you will go? Your wound is healed, is it?”

“ Ah, Miss Mary, the wound is healed, but,” — lowering his voice so that only the ears of the girl might catch the sentence, “ I am suffering ” —

“ You did n't get shot to-day, did you ? ” exclaimed Davie, whose keen hearing had caught each word. “ You have n't been fighting, have you ? ” a look of real concern showing in his face.

Jackson, discomfited, tried to conceal his vexation.

“ There are other wounds quite as deep and painful as flesh wounds.” But as everybody in the room heard the remark, it lost a particular application.

“ If a man is hit in the heart when he is fighting,” observed Davie, in a matter-of-fact way, “ it kills him, does n't it ? ”

“ I think that is the average experience,” was the captain's reply.

“ I shall wear a shield over my heart when I go to war. I'll make a cute little iron one down at the forge. Why don't you cover your heart, Mr. Jackson ? ”

“ What's the use,” continued the captain, “ when you are already wounded ? It's like locking the barn after the horse is stolen.”

The child was puzzled, the simile lacking point for him.

“There are specifics for heart troubles,” observed Martha soberly. “I cannot speak from experience,” — she smiled as she raised her head and turned to Mr. Jackson, — “but I’ve been told that honest daily labor will often work marvelous cures.”

“I know a man that had heart disease and he dropped dead.” Davie contributed the remark with feeling.

“The conversation has taken a rather doleful turn,” said Mary; “let us talk on some more cheerful subject.”

“Pistols,” suggested Davie, always manifesting interest in war and firearms.

The next morning Jackson called upon Mr. David Hardy. His air of importance and determination failed to impress the absent-minded gentleman.

“I wish to speak confidentially with you in regard to your niece, Miss Randolph.”

“My niece, my niece,” repeated Mr. Hardy vaguely, finally arousing to the fact that he probably meant Mary; “why, sir,” surprise depicted upon his frank countenance, “I am astonished, astonished! What can she have done — that — that — you bring any complaints against her?” The words stuck in his throat as he uttered them.

“Mr. Hardy,” — the captain spoke with haste and sincerity, — “you misapprehend my purpose. Your niece is the very flower of womanhood.”

“I — I — yes, — Mr. Jackson — that is — Mary is a very good girl and so is Martha. I am proud of them, and — they seem very happy together — and” —

Evidently Mr. Hardy had lost the connection, his mind drifting away into unknown seas. He had been thinking upon the religious problems suggested by the French Revolution, and this attempt to bring him back to Connecticut and domestic affairs was a great shock.

“I am urged by old friends to return to the army and hasten into the Southwest, but, Mr. Hardy, I cannot go without some cheering word.”

“Yes, indeed,” said Mr. Hardy, “war is an awful calamity, and France will not recover in another generation. But it is the spiritual condition that occasions the chief peril. The whole nation has rapidly passed into rankest infidelity, and God alone knows what will be the outcome.”

Jackson was at his wits' end.

“The top of the morning to you,” said a

mocking voice, stealing gently from the corner of the room.

“ Ah, it is you, Davie. Your uncle and I were discussing war. Shall I see your sisters ? ”

“ Use your eyes, and you ’ll see them on the back porch. Old Dinah ’s sick to-day and the girls are doing the churning. Come and help us, ” leading the way to the rear of the house.

“ Captain Jackson wants to churn, ” shouted the frolicsome child. “ Give him a chance, girls. ”

Not to be embarrassed or beaten by a small boy, the ex-soldier took hold of the churn-dasher and began his service. But there was grave peril from the spilling and spattering of the cream upon his clothes, so Davie insisted upon fastening an apron around his waist.

Davie’s mischief amused them all so that they made the welkin ring with merry laughter. As the butter was coming, the task soon ended, and then the party returned to the cool front room.

“ Come, Davie, ” said the captain indulgently, “ here ’s another gold dollar for you, and you are to sing us a song. ”

He placed the glittering coin upon the palm

of his hand, and the child drew near to examine it.

“ You ’ll sing ? ”

“ Yes,” was the reply, as he slipped the dollar into his pocket and cleared his throat for the performance.

Jackson enjoyed the comic ditties of the day. Several of them had been purchased for Davie, who sang them with great spirit.

Taking his stand near the door, — a convenient point for escape, — and making his very best bow, the child sang : —

“ Hark, from the tombs a doleful sound,
Mine ears, attend the cry ;
Ye living men, come, view the ground
Where you must shortly lie.”

Before the first stanza was finished, Mary started for the child, but he slipped into the entry, and continued the familiar hymn of Watts, —

“ Great God, is this our certain doom ?
And are we still secure ?
Still walking downward to our tomb,
And yet prepared no more ? ”

He sang the two stanzas with his characteristic sweetness and power, with all the sobriety of a worshiper in the meeting-house, and then he fled precipitately.

The effect of the hymn was not cheering,

but the sisters rallied, and made jestful remarks upon the willful pranks of the incorrigible child.

Mr. David Hardy was still sitting in the cool parlor absorbed in books, writing frequent notes upon narrow slips of paper, or gazing blankly into space while living over again the riotous days of the Red Cockade. The entrance of the young people had not disturbed him, but the song of the child appeared to bring him back to the present.

“Ah, Captain Jackson, how are you this fine morning?” the earlier interview with the gentleman having faded into oblivion; “what is the word from our young friends?”

“A glorious day, Mr. Hardy. Fine weather; warm enough to make corn grow, and yet not too hot to be seasonable. It’s the first of the week since I saw the gentlemen. They are staying at the City Hotel, and I warrant you they are making hay while the sun shines. These sporting men like to go on a lark once in a while.”

It had been noticed by the sisters that Jackson seemed averse to saying anything good about his absent comrades. The innuendoes slyly injected into his talk were sometimes venomous, although he generally

avoided mentioning either Gordon or Peyton.

“ Captain Jackson tells us that he will soon return to the army,” observed Mary.

“ Oh, this war, how I grieve over it ! ” was uncle David’s reply.

“ The Federalists seem pretty active these days.” The captain spoke with restraint, for he respected Mr. Hardy, and was anxious to win his goodwill. “ I’m sometimes afraid they’ll be doing things to encourage disunion and worse reverses than we have already suffered.”

“ Well, sir, you may be assured that New England will act for what she thinks is the best. It’s very hard on us here in the East. We’ve taxes to pay for the running of the government and the carrying on of war, and then we’re left to look after the defense of our own shores, and to suffer all the encroachments of the enemy. It’s a very ill-advised and unhappy conflict.”

Jackson bit his lips while Mr. Hardy was speaking. He might discuss politics freely and frankly with Peyton, but there was too much at stake here for him to involve himself in heated talk.

“ I shall be a soldier when I’m a man

grown," interrupted Davie, who had walked into the room unobserved. "I shall cover my heart with a cute iron shield when I go into battle, so 's not to die of heart trouble." He winked significantly at Mary. "Hurrah for New England!"

Having added his share to the conversation, he skipped across the room to his elder sister, printed a resounding kiss square upon her lips, and then climbed airily out of the window.

"I suppose we shall see wild times here in the State before the war ends," observed Martha anxiously. "Will you go to New Orleans, Captain Jackson?"

"I shall be at the service of my country, Miss Martha," was the reply; "glad to go down the Mississippi or elsewhere if needful."

There was further discussion of war, politics, and government, but Jackson spoke with great reserve, fearing to give offense to his friends.

He was sitting beneath the shade of the Virginia creeper on the back porch, one day, the two sisters doing all in their power to entertain him. The man appeared dejected, although the subtle witchery of his eyes was brought into play whenever Mary Randolph

lifted her face from her patchwork, and permitted him to hold her own eyes captive for a moment.

“I’ve a big letter for Captain Jackson,” shouted little Davie, as he ran around the corner of the house. “It’s from New York. Look at it.”

He held it high in the air, while the captain stood upon his feet and reached for the document.

“And Mr. Sherman has a letter from Peyton.”

As the name was spoken, a slight look of alarm passed over Jackson’s face.

“I know Peyton’s writing, and so does the postmaster. Mr. Sherman is away, but he’s coming home in the morning. I think Gordon might have written.”

Jackson lingered a half hour, more depressed than ever, his gloom and disappointment contrasting curiously with the splendor of the day, the liveliness of the girls, and the high hopes with which he had returned to Fairfield.

The following morning he bade his friends a long and painful farewell. A sudden emergency demanded his presence in New York.

CHAPTER XII

“HERE’S FOUL CRIME, — ROBBERY AND
MURDER ”

IT was a mystifying note which Mr. Sherman received from Peyton. The young man wrote for the purpose of explaining his absence.

“Evidently something has happened to Mr. Gordon.” The lawyer was stating the case to the sisters.

“You don’t suppose there’s been trouble between the gentlemen?” Mary put the question to Martha, as they walked down the street.

“Oh, Mary, so many young men are hot-headed and violent. I don’t think Mr. Gordon would do anything wrong,” — spoken with a force of conviction that startled the elder sister, — “but Captain Jackson and Mr. Peyton are Southerners, you know, and there’s no telling what a fiery temper will lead to.”

“But it’s Mr. Gordon that’s — what *did* the letter say?”

“Why, it spoke of him as being ill.”

“Martha, I don’t believe he’s sick. Mr. Peyton would have said it in as many words. He’s been hurt. Something *has* happened.”

The sisters gazed upon each other in alarm. While all the undercurrents of life did not reveal themselves, yet they had seen enough, as the young men came and went, to convince them that a war of passions was waging beneath the smooth exterior.

“The temptations are so great, — this is such a wicked world!”

“Why, Martha, you don’t think they’ve been fighting over cards or money?” The elder sister was skeptical on the subject. “They’re all as generous and large-hearted as anybody in the town.”

“I think, Mary, that Captain Jackson loves money, and as like as not he gambles for it. There have been times when he was poor as poverty. We’ve heard Mr. Gordon say so. I have no faith in him. And did you ever see such a change in a man these past four days? He has something on his mind. Don’t you think it queer that he should leave just when we hear that Mr. Gordon is — is hurt?”

Mary was reflecting upon the matter.

“I’m glad that Captain Jackson goes back to war. What a boyish man he is, with his puzzling contradictions, — so much good in him, and so much bad, I fear; but there’s a fascination about the captain, a something that makes me hope for the best, — possibilities, I suppose we’d call it.”

The sisters walked a few steps before the conversation was continued.

“Martha, you were always a little prudish, and much too stiff and formal. Gentlemen would pay you a great deal more attention if you did n’t hold them at arm’s length all the time.”

This was good-natured banter.

“I fear there’s been a fracas, and Mr. Gordon is severely injured.”

The tone of the speaker was positive.

“I can’t tell you how I feel, or what I see;” a great shadow overcast the girl’s face, and then lifted as she continued, “but I have faith, — I have faith.”

It was one of those unmapped, inexplicable experiences which come to keen-sighted, highly sensitive natures.

They now entered the home.

Jackson returned to New York, but he was not seen in public for several days, his

whereabouts being unknown to friend or foe. It was between two and three weeks after the duel that he made his reappearance and announced a speedy return to the army.

During this time Gordon had been nursed by Peyton and a faithful serving-man, so that the danger passed, and he was once again able to meet friends and share good fellowship. But his lips were closed upon the subject of his wound.

“Peyton,” he remarked one day, “it’s worth such an incident in order to give a man the chance to fathom the depths of your nature. There’s a passage somewhere in the Bible — I’ve been trying to recall it for two weeks — that fits your case exactly. It runs like this: ‘A friend sticketh closer than a brother.’ I shall ask Mr. Beecher to preach from that text the next time I see him.”

“Ah, Gordon, I don’t know your story, but you’re no more ‘Mystery Gordon’ to me. I don’t care where you were born, or who were your father and mother, or what drove you to these parts, but I know *you*. I thought I’d learned something about friendship during the years that we’ve clung together, but Lord, man, it’s these weeks that’s opened my eyes, and made me heart-rich.”

They were sitting together in the twilight, a cool breeze from the bay fanning their faces.

“I intended to throw away my fire, Peyton,” — he was talking about the duel, — “then I was suddenly taken with the fancy to clip off the tip of Jackson’s right ear. Did you notice any blood on the man?”

“Yes, I saw him cover his ear with a be-spotted handkerchief. But he must have had it dressed at once, and it must have been a very slight wound, for he was all right when he reached Fairfield. Little Davie’s account of his visit was graphic. If the ear had been seriously cropped, he’d have discovered it, and reported the matter.”

“It was downright hatred that drove the man to pick a quarrel with me.”

“I heard to-day that Captain Jackson had started for the Southwest. The girls told me in Fairfield Saturday that he had given up his law office and reëntered the service. But it’s too good to believe.”

Peyton had made a hasty trip to the shore town the previous week in order to re-stock their wardrobe.

“Well, I still repeat what I’ve said several times, — there’s good in the scoundrel, spite of all the bad; but, Peyton, he’s the very

devil when drinking freely or wild with passion. There's no telling what crimes the lad would commit under provocation."

"That's true; and he intended to kill you. It's a wonder that he did n't. Gordon, I shall not believe he's gone South until I get some definite official statement."

"I think we are rid of him, thank heaven!"

The young gentlemen had pleasant rooms on the cool side of the tavern; they were now enjoying days of delightful comradeship, for Gordon was rapidly winning back his strength in anticipation of an early return to Fairfield.

Although commerce suffered a paralysis during the years of war between America and Great Britain, and Gordon's capital was invested in shipping so that it brought him nothing, yet he never lacked funds. This was another mystery that caused remark on the part of Jackson and his cronies. How was he supplied with cash, unless through some dealings with friends and patrons abroad?

The captain had found it convenient to borrow large sums in the days of their intimate association, and Gordon was one of the men that he had often drained in a cosy game of cards.

There are people who feel that they are not on terms of intimacy with friends unless every secret is disclosed to them. There are other people who care naught for the things which are purely private or personal. Friendship is a relation too sacred for them to vex and belittle it with curiosity, trivial thoughts, indifferent personalities. It is the real man, apart from the accidents of station or the pettiness of conventionality, that holds one in the strong, enduring bonds of a noble affection.

So Peyton did not discuss the money affairs of his friend; and he never doubted that Gordon came honestly by his funds. He had such confidence in him that he knew the man would tell what seemed best in respect to business, family, past, future, life, or death. It was not for him to stay in the court of the strangers when he was led into the soul's Holy of Holies.

During Gordon's recovery from his wound, a sum of money was brought to his room. Peyton did not see the agent through whose hands it came, and he made no inquiries. His friend mentioned the fact, and asked him to use the money freely in their daily expenses.

“I wish you’d carry a part of this cash with you,” said Gordon one day. “I don’t like to leave so large an amount lying loose about the room. It may prove a temptation to some poor sinner.”

“Well, as I’m settling the bills, I’ll take what I think is necessary, and leave the rest to try the soul of the man who happens to come across it.”

The City Hotel was a popular hostelry, the scene of many a revel, a centre for the bucks of the city. As the times were restless, and crime rioted in various sections of the land, men of every stamp and character frequented such a well-known public house.

“I think we’re among honest people,” — Gordon was bidding Peyton good-night, — “but I shall be glad to find myself in Knapp’s tavern again, and hear the genial postmaster remark upon the letters which he distributes with such grace.”

They both smiled.

“We’ll go on Captain Burr’s sloop day after to-morrow, if the doctor says the word.”

So the young men separated, Gordon’s servant putting him to bed, and making him comfortable for the night.

The hotel being a noisy place, the early

morning hours brought the only quiet of day or night.

A crowd of roystering blades were singing their ribald songs and filling the house with their unrestrained revelry.

Gordon faced the wakeful hours, turning restlessly from side to side in his bed, heaping gentlemanly maledictions upon the careless, jovial crowd below.

Above the din of the carousal, he suddenly detected low voices. Were they a company of acquaintances, and had some of them foolishly come to play a trick upon him?

The thought flitted through his brain.

A moment elapsed, and Gordon was certain that he heard footsteps in the dark. Raising himself in bed, he listened with acute attention.

“Who’s there, and what’s wanted?”

The voice rang clear and strong through the chamber. The noise of continued jollity fell upon his ears.

It occurred to him that possibly a servant had detected the money, which he was accustomed to place in the middle drawer of the old bureau nigh the head of his bed. Looking that way, he felt rather than saw the form of a man.

Gordon was not in a condition to wrestle with burglars; yet, could he lie there feebly, nervelessly, and see a man rob him?

Springing from his bed, he made a dash in the dark, and grappled with the shadowy unknown. It was an unequal match from the beginning, and Gordon knew it, but he concentrated every energy, and threw the man to the floor. Had it been a single-handed tussle, he might have come off victor; but in the struggle Gordon was flung against a second intruder, and the three men now clinched, and fought like tigers.

“This is folly,” hoarsely muttered a thick voice; “finish the fellow.”

Gordon turned upon the speaker, and hit him a fell blow in the face, but the partner stabbed him twice in the breast, and the fight was ended.

The unconscious victim lay in a little pool of blood by his bedside while the two men deliberately lighted a candle, searched the bureau, pocketed the bills and the coins, — then extinguishing the light, they passed through the door into the hall, one of them giving the body an ugly kick, and invoking fiendish curses upon the prostrate man.

The noise of revelry continued.

Ten minutes later, a blood-stained, disfigured, half-clad man suddenly interrupted the festivities on the first floor.

“Will you riot here while murderers and cut-throats are raiding the place?” It was Peyton. “Lend a hand, some of you men. Bring lights.”

Snatching a silver candlestick from one of the tables, he ran up the stairs, followed by a score of sobered, frightened men.

Entering Gordon's room, they stumbled against his limp form.

“Run for a doctor, will you?” Discovering in the crowd some of his acquaintances, Peyton was addressing them. “Arouse the watch. Here's foul crime, — robbery and murder.”

It was a night of wild excitement. Lights soon appeared in every room. Doctors, watchmen, servants, guests — men, women, children — were running hither and thither in vain confab and activity. Half a dozen rooms had been entered and robbed. Two men, Peyton and Gordon, braving the intruders, had fought with might and main. Peyton, driving the thieves from his room, had given the alarm, but Gordon was still insensible, the extent of his injuries undetermined.

It was a ghastly sight, — the poor victim with torn, bedabbled garment, matted hair, crimsoned face, lying in the midst of the dark, tell-tale pool; sightless, voiceless, awaiting the return of life or the break of death!

What strange creatures are men, that they will dare to play fast and loose with human destiny, — that they will even viciously, defiantly assume the prerogative of God, and say whether it shall be life or death!

When Gordon opened his eyes, it was to see the careworn, distraught face of Peyton bending over him, and Doctor Hosack sitting close by his side.

“Thank God!” There was a depth, a sweetness of fervor in the friend’s voice most grateful to the sufferer.

“I — I” — Gordon hesitated like one collecting his wandering thoughts; there was a swift flash of intelligence. “I’ve been robbed. Did you catch them?”

Peyton was overjoyed, for they feared he would never speak again. There had been a great loss of blood, and the shock to his nervous system was a thing yet to be reckoned.

“No, my friend,” — the word “friend” had become strangely dear to the two young fellows, — “we did n’t catch them. They’ve

gone, and they've carried away your money, but what care we so long as you stay?"

Did ever a man freight simple language with stores upon stores of love, the words, "what care we so long as you stay," were burdened to the limits by Peyton.

Little more was said. The happy task of winning Gordon back to life again now filled the days.

CHAPTER XIII

“ THAT FLAG SHALL NEVER COME DOWN
WHILE I AM ALIVE ”

JACKSON'S first letter to Mary was written the day that he purported to start for the Southwest. Passionate, disconnected, urgent, it betrayed a youth close upon the borders of distraction, blowing hot and cold with hopes and fears.

Mary read parts of it, and then refolding the paper, thrust it away.

“ Hurrah, hurrah ! ” shouted little Davie several days later ; “ what do you think I 've got ? ”

He was capering through the yard, making a zigzag course toward his sisters, who had sought the shelter of the back porch.

“ It 's a real letter, and it 's to me. See the writing there ? ” pointing to the address inscribed with full, flowing hand. “ I know who wrote it, ” skipping away from Mary, who reached for the letter that she might break the seal and read it to the child.

It was his first letter, — one of the events in his little life.

“That’s Peyton’s handwriting. Don’t I know it? Now, we’ll have all the news.”

A few more antics, and the boy gave the packet to Mary, who quickly tore the neat folds apart.

“My dear Davie,” — so it began, — “you may thank your stars that we’re alive to tell the tale. We expected to go to Fairfield last week; but one night some robbers made a raid on the City Hotel, where we are staying, and they gave Mr. Gordon and me a very lively time. There were two of them, and perhaps three. They broke into Gordon’s room first, and while they were mousing round to find his money, he jumped up and pitched into them. He’s been sick, you know, so that he was n’t fit to attack a flea, but he made the robbers jump for a few seconds; one of them stabbed him twice, and knocked him senseless, and then they found the money, and went into several other rooms. There was a crowd of noisy fellows raising a terrible racket downstairs, so folks did n’t hear what was going on above them. When the robbers came to my room, I was asleep, but I heard them fumbling in the dark, so I shot

at one of them, and then for a minute we chased each other around the table, the strangers getting as good as they sent every time. Finally they ran out of the room, and I ran downstairs and called for help and lights. The robbers, of course, escaped. When I found my way to Gordon's room, he was lying on the floor, still as death. We put him on the bed, sent for Doctor Hosack, and worked over him for a couple of hours, and then he came back to life, brave as you please, asking, the first thing, if we'd caught the scamps. Gordon is doing very well; as well as could be expected. We're going to take the first sloop that sails for Fairfield; so look out for us. It is n't too late for swimming and fishing and hunting, is it?"

Davie listened with relish, the typical boy's love of an adventure glowing in his face.

"Would n't I like to have been there?" was his first remark. "I'd have tripped the devils, and" —

"Why, Davie, Davie, who taught you to say such bad words?" exclaimed Martha, with horror.

"Why, that's what Gordon and Peyton both called the sly dog that robbed the tavern more'n a year ago."

“How thankful I am that it’s no worse. Poor man! Mr. Gordon is having such a time!” Mary spoke with feeling.

“But we’ll see them soon,” exclaimed Davie, every motion expressing happy anticipation. “We’ll have a picnic for them, girls; and we’ll stuff Mr. Gordon with all the good things Dinah can make, and I’ll row him in a boat so he can enjoy the sea air; and you girls can fuss over him, and he’ll get strong again.”

Away flew Davie to tell the news, while the sisters lingered on the back porch.

“Is there some inexplicable fatality connected with our friends?” Mary cast a questioning glance toward Martha.

“Sometimes life gets sadly jangled.” This was the sister’s answer. “I have never doubted the integrity of Mr. Gordon and Mr. Peyton. I think they are manly, gallant gentlemen; but there’s an atmosphere of secrecy about them that disturbs me,—they say so little about their past, they seem so content to stay in this quiet town, they get into such curious adventures, they appear so different from other young people that we know.”

“Well, Martha, I thought you approved of

reserve. As for their spending a few months in Fairfield, I take it as a great compliment to the town and" — waiting a moment — "to — to us" — spoken with infinite charm. "They do seem to have more than their share of adventures, but that makes them all the more attractive. I'm like Davie. So long as no real harm is done, I say the more spice of adventure put into life, the better. It saves us from stagnation."

"Mary, do you suppose that Jackson is the evil spirit which haunts Mr. Gordon? I've thought of it."

There was a flush on the sister's face as she replied. Jackson's letter was hidden away in a secret place, unanswered, and not to be answered; yet Mary could not think that a young man revealing so many good qualities, patriotic to the heart's core, handsome and soldierly in his bearing, inheriting various traditions of a religious Scotch ancestry, could be a knave and a criminal.

"Martha, do be charitable to Captain Jackson. I'm afraid Davie has prejudiced you."

When Gordon and Peyton came back to Fairfield, the patriotic citizens of the place were equipped for war. Fort Union had

been garrisoned, Battery Point prepared for defense, and the town company of infantry well drilled in the evolutions of the battlefield.

“ We form ourselves into a voluntary association, and pledge our lives, our property, and sacred honor to defend our rights, privileges, and independence,” said these men.

Numerous public meetings fostered enthusiasm, “ the virtuous females of Mill River ” had made military clothes for the local soldiery, and a spirit of fight was manifest on various occasions.

“ We view with indignation the many outrages committed by Great Britain against our country,” — quoting from the resolutions adopted by the Democrats of the village. “ We view with contempt their pretended right to blockade our coast.” “ We view with abhorrence their repeated pretensions of friendship.”

During these days Gordon remained on friendly terms with his Fairfield acquaintances, and soon regained his wonted strength, venturing a ride to Stonington on the eighth of the month.

In obedience to Admiral Cochrane’s orders to “ destroy the coast towns and ravage the country,” Commodore Hardy appeared off

the harbor with the *Ramillies*, the *Pactolus*, the bomb-ship *Terror*, and the brig *Dispatch*. Having anchored his small squadron two miles away, at four o'clock in the afternoon of August ninth, he sent a flag to the town authorities, saying: "Not wishing to destroy the unoffending inhabitants residing in the town of Stonington, one hour is granted them from the receipt of this to remove out of the town."

When the citizens asked if a flag would be received from them, an answer was given in the negative, so the stout-hearted people sent this characteristic reply: —

"We shall defend the place to the last extremity. Should it be destroyed, we will perish in the ruins."

The ring of defiance resounded in the words; the dreaded day of conflict had dawned.

Consternation and excitement prevailed on every side. Women, children, the aged, and the infirm were hurried into the back country, silver and keepsakes thrown into carts and dragged beyond the danger line. Men being summoned to resist the enemy, a small band of militia was stationed on the point of the peninsula to watch for the approach of the

British, — swift and humble preparation for the fight.

At eight o'clock the bomb-ship began to throw shells into the village.

“Now, this is something worth seeing,” remarked Peyton. “I'm sorry for the townsfolk, but here's a taste of war evidently planned for our special benefit.”

The young gentlemen had stabled their horses in a barn on the edge of the village, and hurried down to the centre of action.

As night came on, the shells continued to fly over the town, and rockets were hurled from the launches. Every able-bodied man on shore was alert putting out the fires that were started in different parts of the town, or running hither and thither in the effort to do something for the preservation of property and the defense of the place.

“Look at that shell as it sails gracefully through the air! And, by Jove, there's a rocket coming our way.” Gordon was speaking, as they emerged from the tavern where they had been taking a hasty supper. “Let's go down to where Lieutenant Hough and his men are stationed.”

At midnight the firing ceased. There had been no loss of life, and the injury done to

buildings was slight. Meanwhile, messengers informed General Cushing, the United States commander of the district, and he communicated with General Williams, the commander of militia, so that a regiment was ordered to Stonington.

It was on the way to the extreme point of the peninsula that Gordon and Peyton overtook a bold company of men dragging the only ordnance of the place down to the spot where it might avail in case the enemy attempted a landing. There were two eighteen, one six, and one four pound cannon. Breastworks were constructed, and here by the streaming light of the rockets the militia observed the approach of the British. Reserving their fire until the barges and a launch drew nigh the southeast point, they belched forth with startling effect, shattering the enemy's vessels so that they retreated to the larger ships of war.

Through the night there was ceaseless vigilance and activity, Gordon and Peyton passing up and down the streets and roads with other restless watchers, anxious for the coming of the dawn, that it might bring uncertainty to an end. Little sleep was there in Stonington that night, for the prospects were that the

coming day would witness a desperate fight, and possibly the annihilation of the town.

The whaling and sealing business of Stonington had been large in bygone days, so that the town was well-nigh ruined by the war. For its many ships were useless, while its citizens, formerly engaged in various maritime ventures, eked out a poor living.

“You have a little money invested in some of these vessels, have you not?” inquired Peyton, pointing in the direction of the shadowy merchant fleet lying along the nearer shore.

“Yes,” was Gordon’s answer. “I’m here to see what becomes of my investment. This is one of the incidents in commercial life.”

“You take it philosophically.”

“A man is a fool to take it any other way. There are ups and downs for all of us.”

Toward morning the two men snatched a little sleep, but they were aroused at daylight when the Pactolus and the Dispatch made their way nearer the village.

The frigate grounded, and was useless for the fight which ensued. When the Terror opened fire, it grew so hot that the troops did not assemble in the village; but the majority of the shells passed over the houses and struck where little damage resulted.

A little after six o'clock, Captain Holmes, an expert gunner, took charge of the eighteen pounder in the battery on the point. The gun was double shotted with solid round balls, and when the Dispatch drew near enough to present a fair mark, the venerable soldier fired a shot which hit the brig in the hull. For an hour there was the swift interchange of war, but the ammunition of Captain Holmes was exhausted, and he was obliged to withdraw, spiking his gun so that it could not be turned on the town by the enemy.

"The village is defenseless now," exclaimed Peyton, as he observed the change in affairs.

"Did you hear what Holmes said when one of the men at the battery proposed a surrender? It's worth remembering."

"What was it?"

The two were standing on the edge of the town a few rods from the militia.

"'No,' spoken with indignation, 'that flag shall never come down while I am alive!'"

"That sounds like '76," responded Peyton.

"Ah, is not that powder,—some fresh kegs?"

"And they are dragging the cannon to the blacksmith shop to drill the spike out."

This was about nine o'clock. A little later the redoubt on the point opened fire again.

"I tell you," exclaimed Peyton excitedly, "we're hitting the brig, and she'll haul off soon to safer quarters."

Throngs of observers stood watching the effect of the eighteen pounder as her shots struck the Dispatch.

"There she goes. She's slipping her cables. Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The Terror continued shelling the town, although it was a waste of ammunition.

Observing that the fight wavered in the balance, the militia gathered, and order was restored, a new spirit of courage showing itself in the return of many people to their homes. During the afternoon, a flag was sent to Commodore Hardy, asking him the fate of the town. Being assured that no torpedoes had been fitted out from Stonington, he agreed to cease hostilities on condition that the wife of James Stewart, a British Consul, was sent on board. But General Isham, commanding the American forces, replied that he was not able to comply with the demand, so another night of terror and uncertainty passed.

"The fracas drags along a slow length," remarked Gordon on the evening of the

second day. "Another twenty-four hours of suspense will bring on a fever, or drive the women and children mad."

"But you see that our forces are gathering in larger numbers all the time, so that we can prevent a landing. If the shells and rockets don't bring on a conflagration, we're safe."

When the night shut down, there was a stillness that alarmed the citizens almost as much as the noise of roaring cannon and bursting shells. The young men watched with their acquaintances a part of the time, and slept a disturbed sleep through the rest of the night.

"By heavens!" exclaimed Peyton, "they've made a fresh start."

The Terror was throwing shells at sunrise, and later the Ramillies and the Pactolus opened fire.

"What a spiteful broadside." It was twice repeated. "Is it a parting salute?"

"Yes," answered Gordon. "They are withdrawing."

Cheers rent the air.

It was past noon when the Terror ceased her bombardment, and about four o'clock the enemy sailed away toward Fisher's Island.

"Come, we will take a note of the enemy's

ravages," observed Peyton, as a little knot of young men passed down the main street of the town, and marked the signs of desolation.

The British had thrown more than three hundred shells and fire carcasses, more than fifty tons of metal being used by them in the bombardment; but not a person was killed, and only half a dozen people wounded. Some twenty buildings had caught fire, but the faithful watch and work of the volunteer patrol succeeded in extinguishing the flames. Forty houses and shops, or other structures, were hit, but only three or four of them seriously injured.

"Well, this is the most astonishing thing in all the history of warfare," exclaimed Peyton, after they had inspected the town and heard the reports of damages. "A lively bombardment on the part of three or four ships, a strong force of marines to back up the play of their artillery, and a defenseless town at their mercy; yet such a rally of citizens and militia in resistance, such bravery and shrewdness in the management of the brief campaign, that not a serious casualty is recorded. Why, if Connecticut has taken no other part in the war, she has shown a spirit and achieved a victory here that is worth all honor."

Gordon nodded an assent.

“And the old flag remains nailed to the stick,” continued Peyton, yielding to an impulse prompting him to huzza. “They say there are nine holes in it, but in spite of its riddled condition, it still holds together and flaunts its challenge to the enemy.”

It was a futile and discouraging action for the British. They gained nothing, and report said their losses were twenty-one killed and fifty wounded. A hostile squadron had been repulsed by undisciplined volunteers with meagre equipment, aided in the latter part of the conflict by a few helpers from the neighboring troops.

“Gordon,” remarked Peyton, “you look unhappy. Did any shipping catch fire?”

“No, Peyton, it is n’t the loss of ships or trade that breaks my heart. It’s war, vain, heartless, shameful war, — mother against daughter, or daughter against mother. And where is the sense or the justice of it?” The men stood lost in thought.

As they retraced their steps through the shore towns, the words recurred to them again and again — “mother against daughter, daughter against mother. And where is the sense or the justice of it?”

CHAPTER XIV

A FORCED VISIT TO THE RAMILLIES

THE August days passed all too quickly. Neither of the young men was in a mood for work, and Gordon's accident argued another reason for his putting off a return to the office of Mr. Sherman.

War and politics continued to be the topics uppermost in the minds of the people, for the purpose of the British to raid the shore towns had aroused all the martial instincts of the rugged New Englander, although the peace party pressed the necessity for an end to hostilities as never before.

There were petty fights off the Connecticut shores day after day, reminding the older inhabitants of the whaleboat warfare carried on with a high hand during the Revolution. The enemy sailed up and down the waters with the air of bullies who boastfully strut in public places.

A race between American and English boats became a common event, many thrilling

adventures being related by the men whose enterprises urged them to brave all perils of assault or capture.

Sailing was one of the sports that brought fresh color to Gordon's cheeks. A good seaman, loving the salt water, he knew how to manage his craft with skill. So the men spent many days in skirting the shore, taking with them as inseparable comrade, little Davie.

During these happy excursions they had been fortunate in evading the enemy, a single pursuit on the part of the British breaking the even tenor of their way. Gordon and Peyton did not wish to fall into the clutches of Commodore Hardy, for stories were rife concerning the fresh impressment of men into the royal service. Yet the pleasure of sailing was too great for them to pay much heed to any risks incurred.

"I have half a mind to return home and enlist in the army," remarked Peyton.

They had been reading the account of Admiral Cockrane at Washington. It was familiar ground to the young man, many friends and relatives being among the sufferers; the narrative aroused both indignation and resentment.

“It was a dastardly act,” exclaimed Mary. “I hate men that engage in such a wanton destruction of property.”

“That is the policy which shapes their course now,” answered Peyton. “The increase of their fleet on this side of the water means a war scourge all along the shore. They think that ravaging our coast will bring us to terms.”

“I’m for an honorable peace,” — there was a noble earnestness in the manner of Gordon, — “and I believe the sentiment prevails in England. War is always cruel. This entire Atlantic line lies at the mercy of the foe; but I dare predict that the horrors which you suggest will not be widespread.”

“You are sanguine, my friend; or do you speak with authority?” quizzically expressed by Peyton. “I detect no signs of settlement.”

“It is always darkest before day,” continued Gordon. “You don’t think Commodore Hardy has been harsh or mean in his treatment of the shore people, do you?”

“Speaking his name reminds me that I have intended to ask Mr. David Hardy concerning his forbears. The commodore may be a relation of these young ladies.”

“Curious that it never occurred to us,” answered Mary. “But our family has lived in this town so many generations that it would be necessary to go back a long way to discover kinship ties with this officer of the royal navy.”

Little Davie was thinking about Commodore Hardy on the next day when the gentlemen skimmed across the sound to Long Island.

“I’d like to see the *Ramillies*.” He had questioned Gordon a score of times in respect to the flagship and the commander of the fleet.

It was sheer good nature that prompted the two men to venture along the coast until they sighted the ship by the help of their powerful glass.

Such curiosity often passed unnoted, but in this case the brig *Dispatch* turned her attention to the pleasure-seekers, and bore down upon the sloop with evident purpose of investigation. The British were suspicious of every strange-acting craft, still fearing the hideous execution of the submarine mechanism devised by American ingenuity.

There was nothing in the aspect of Gordon’s pleasure boat to excite the hostility of

the British, but it became evident that the brig intended to overhaul the stranger. Every bit of canvas on each craft was made to do full duty. There was a spanking breeze, and the full-bellied sails caught the spirit of the race.

Gordon and Peyton bent to their sailor tasks like old salts, while Davie watched the sport with intense delight. What is more exhilarating than a race under such circumstances?

Gordon's aim was to dart into some of the friendly bays or inlets that fret the Connecticut shore, and thus elude their pursuers, but the right place did not show itself, and the brig gained steadily upon them.

On they swept, like huge creatures of a mythical age, ploughing the sea in pride, driving the yielding waters before them. Every nerve was stretched, every device employed, while the hunter drew nearer and nearer his prey.

There was a familiar, hopeful turn of jutting headland in the distance. Could they make the little passage framed by jagged rocks, and press into the small haven beyond, or must they give over the race and submit humbly to captivity?

The boom of a gun, a white puff of smoke, the splintering of a mast, and the question was settled.

“It’s a vain flight,” said Gordon coolly.

Davie watched each movement of the foe with speechless fascination. As the sloop lay to, and the launch from the brig cut through the brine, the gentlemen quietly awaited the coming of their captors.

“They’re going to take us on to the brig, ain’t they?” It was the first remark of the child since the ball had splintered the mast.

“I think so, Davie.”

Gordon spoke in a matter-of-fact way.

“I s’pose they’ll impress us into the navy, won’t they?”

The men smiled, for the child was small of his age.

“What under the sun would you do in the navy?”

“I’d kill the tyrants!” hissed the boy, rage mantling his cheeks.

Peyton was thinking upon the awkwardness of their position. It would be apparent to any discerning eye that Gordon and himself were gentlemen, yet gentlemen had been made to suffer when caught by their British foes.

When the royal officer boarded the sloop, he was received with deference, and the command to go with him to the Dispatch was courteously obeyed.

On board the brig the prisoners were treated with respect, while a turn about having been made, the Ramillies soon hove in sight. They were taking the men to the flagship.

An hour or more passed, during which time Davie observed this new phase of life suddenly revealed to him, while his companions gravely reflected upon the situation.

If Commodore Hardy was the man that common report faithfully described, they might look for kind treatment and a possible dismissal on the morrow. If he was to be credited with what his haters said about him, they might expect something disagreeable.

"I'll see the Ramillies," whispered Davie to Gordon.

A launch carried them all to the commodore's ship, and he happened to be on deck when they arrived. One after the other climbed into the great warship; first the captive crew, and then Davie and Peyton. Gordon came up last.

As Commodore Hardy cast his eyes upon

the company, a swift change in the expression of his face was noted,— surprise, amazement. It was a fleeting look, which gave place to his accustomed aspect.

Davie had faced about that he might see his friends, and it was in his turning that he observed Gordon lift the hand to his face and press the forefinger to his lips. Glancing quickly toward the commodore, Davie detected a responsive flash of intelligence.

After a searching examination of the prisoners, Commodore Hardy led Gordon below, while the other members of his party lingered on deck.

An hour passed, when they returned, and the word was given to make the Americans as comfortable as possible. This was Davie's opportunity to examine the warship.

“And what is your name, my little man?” questioned the commodore, observing the child's interest and fearlessness.

“David Hardy Randolph, sir.”

“Hardy! Hardy!” exclaimed the commodore, with curiosity. “How came you by my name?”

“It's for my uncle, David Hardy,” was the quick reply. “And my grandfather's name was Jeremiah Hardy.”

“And how long, pray tell me, have you and your people lived in these parts?”

“Oh, ever since Anne Hardy the witch was hung, and Mary says that’s more’n a hundred and fifty years ago.”

“No chance to claim you for a British subject, then.” A smile spread over the speaker’s face.

“No, sir. I’m a freeborn American citizen.” Little Davie swelled with visible pride as he made the reply.

The next morning Gordon with his two friends and the crew returned to the sloop.

All day and all night they lay becalmed near the fleet, but on the second morning, catching a favorable breeze, they sped on their homeward way.

Gordon appeared Sphinx-like. Evidently matters of serious import had been discussed in his private interview with Commodore Hardy. Davie imagined that his friend was in trouble. Watching the play of emotion in the man’s face, the great, loving heart of the little child suffered for him. Stately ship, savage guns, obedient marines in their queer uniforms, the order, cleanliness, majesty of the man-of-war, all stamped themselves upon the mind of Davie; but he did not ponder

over these things, nor picture to himself the delight of telling their adventure to the home folks. Davie was distressed for his good friend.

After a time he stole quietly to his side, — Gordon was leaning against the shattered mast, eyes fixed in space, — and reaching for his right hand, grasped it with quick, nervous grip, confidently keeping hold until the man might deign to notice him.

There they stood for minutes, man and boy linked into beautiful fraternity, words that might interrupt the flow of sympathy left unsaid.

There was a delicacy of insight peculiar to the boy; a maturity of discernment which guided him in perplexing circumstances. For his precocity was not mere smartness; an element of spiritual shrewdness pertained to it, a wonderful heart knowledge and power.

Gordon came back from his far-away thoughts and returned the gentle pressure of the boy's hand. Looking down into his young face, the kind man smiled.

“I know you're close by my side, Davie.” These were Gordon's words of greeting. “You're a great comfort to me.”

“Shall we tell about it?” whispered the child.

It had occurred to him that there might be reasons why their adventure should not be bruited abroad, and this was perhaps the greatest sacrifice that a child could make under the circumstances, — to hold his tongue and nurse such a rare secret.

“We’ll have to tell about it,” was the answer. “But we’ll be very wise in our story-telling. Commodore Hardy thought we might be planning some mischief, and when I told him how we liked to sail, and that I had been sick, he let us go. You see he’s a Hardy — has good blood in him — does n’t wish to do anybody harm — and will be glad when the war ends.”

Davie knew that Gordon told him the surface explanation; that his interview with Commodore Hardy had to do with other and deeper things than the pleasure sailing up and down the sound; but this was all that his friend chose to say. Such was the boy’s faith in Gordon that he accepted this answer as sufficient, although curiosity was not less imperious in his nature than in the nature of other boys at his age.

Peyton’s perplexity equaled that of his comrades, it being clear to him that Commodore Hardy and Gordon were old acquaintances,

and that possibly a more intimate connection existed. The "blue-light" agitation came to his mind. And then there still clung to his friend the mystery which years had not cleared away.

At the same time Peyton harbored no doubts respecting Gordon's honor and straightforwardness. There must be good and sufficient reasons for the secrecy which enveloped the past like a mist clinging to a mountain.

"I'll stick to him through thick and thin. I'll never distrust him, even when the darkness is blacker than the murkiest, stormiest night."

This was the conclusion which Peyton reached as he figured over the knotty problems which harassed him and they entered Black Rock Harbor.

CHAPTER XV

LAUNCHING INTO THE DEEP

THE absence of Davie and the young gentlemen was a time of great distress in the Hardy family. Capture and impressment by the British — the fate to which so many men had been consigned — stared the home people in the face.

It was a festive day, therefore, when Davie once again bestirred himself in familiar places and gave way to the wild joy of his soul. The adventure concerned all the townsfolk, so that the story was told and retold until it grew threadbare. But never a word compromised Gordon.

The young men entered Mr. Sherman's office in September; it was merely a nominal service which they performed. Recent events had turned their thoughts into other channels than law. They read the local papers and "Niles's Register" with great care; they enjoyed long talks with Mr. Sherman on the political outlook; they posted themselves on

every phase of the war; and last but not least, they quoted sentimental poetry with appreciation of its subtler meanings.

“I’m in a strait betwixt two,” said Peyton. “Shall I go, or shall I stay?”

It was a question of joining the army.

“Well, my friend,” — Gordon’s manner was judicial, — “I do not wish to be intrusive, but it’s my opinion that this war will soon end. Politics has played the deuce with England and America all through the conflict. The people do not want to fight; they have nobler ambitions than the achievement of military glory. Is not France an illustration and a warning? The Englishmen on both sides of the sea are men of finer, higher instincts than the big or small Napoleons of the world. We’ve a great destiny, — we Anglo-Saxons, — and mind you, we’re the same people, whether it’s the Union Jack that floats above us or the Stars and Stripes. The war is a gigantic piece of folly — worse than a blunder, it is criminal. We are one race, and our interests common, indivisible.”

As the speaker delivered himself, the eloquence of sincerity, intense moral conviction, and superb faith in his creed transformed the quiet, reserved man into a veritable prophet of light and hope.

“Gordon, it does my heart good to hear such talk. We’re so depressed and harassed, our citizens are so split into factions, our trade has become so demoralized, that all the joy seems gone out of life;” Peyton halted in his speech, and then continued with brighter spirit, — “barring the joy of love.”

“Strange, is n’t it?” There was a change in Gordon’s face, wrought by the magic of Peyton’s last words; “‘And now abideth faith, hope, love,’” — the man’s eyes glowed with a beautiful light, — “‘but the greatest of these is love.’”

The gentlemen had walked down to the beach in order that they might signal to the sloop and take a sail in the mellow autumn afternoon. Flinging themselves upon the sand, they continued the conversation.

“The great mass of people never taste the sweets of real love. Do you recall what David said in his lament over Jonathan? ‘Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.’ Why don’t we rise to such heights? Love is a spiritual thing, and there’s little else worth naming in life.”

“Peyton, you’ve been constantly doing the things that you ought not to have done, and leaving undone the things which you

ought to have done, but you're quite a lovable fellow," — this was raillery, — "and I sometimes think you are learning several lessons in the great school of the world."

It had been observed by Gordon that his friend was more pensive than usual these days. The thought of leaving Fairfield might induce such a mood; but there was a better reason for it.

"It is plainly the teaching of old King David that love between great souls without regard to sex is the very consummation of human experience. What a fight that man would win who sacrificed the lower for the higher love, — love which had the fire of sex in it for love which glowed with the fire of a deathless friendship?"

The comrades had launched out into the deeps of thought and feeling. If now they cast the net into the fathomless sea, would their draught break the delicate web of life or yield them untold riches?

"Peyton, no man living is more loyal to woman than myself. That sounds boastful, but I have good reason. I reverence her strength and beauty of soul, — her noble, generous, exalted nature. But David was right. There's a love which passes the love

of women. It towers above all earthly passion, for its essence is of the eternal. There's not a flaw of grossness in it. Wholly unselfish, such love dreams, suffers, dies, and forever lives for the sake of the true heart which inspires it."

There was the gentle break of rippling waters as the tide flowed in from the farther sea.

"What fools we are!" The remark had a brusque flavor. "We live along the edges of experiences that stretch endlessly into realms of happiness, and there we fret and vex ourselves, never pushing into the unknown glorious interiors, sore and weary with our little, narrow life!"

"They are two lovely girls," said Gordon irrelevantly.

"There's a natural gayety and light-heartedness about Miss Mary. I wonder how Puritanism can flower into such a merry, winsome spirit?"

"But, Peyton, that's all on the surface. Her blithe and cheerful ways conceal infinite treasures."

"I never saw such unselfish devotion. I don't believe that either sister ever felt a pang of jealousy. And when the younger

mothers the elder sister, and gives her quiet, tender rebukes, how graciously they are received."

"Yet they seem to have little in common on first acquaintance," continued Gordon. "I remember with what fascination I used to watch them the first year of our friendship, — the one a happy offset to the other, — blonde against brunette, mirth against soberness."

The shouts of Davie and the approach of the sloop summoned the gentlemen to their sport. An exhilarating flight through the restless waters — for the wind was rising, and there were signs of an eastern storm — made it a merry party. They were off Compo Beach when the cloud, no bigger than a man's hand, appeared above the horizon. An hour later the sky was black, the wind howled, and the rain swept down upon them in sheets. They were a sorry-looking trio when the sloop anchored in Black Rock Harbor, and it was a rough walk over to the village; but their spirits seemed to rise with the gale, — there was endless overflow of mirth, — and when at last they entered the big room of the tavern, and stood mud-stained and water-soaked before the great, riotous fire blazing on the hearth, they were

the life of the company, giving way to their mischievous impulses like boys set loose from school.

Davie was sent home for dry clothes, while his two companions retired to their chambers for necessary changes.

Peyton appeared at the Hardys' an hour later to say that Gordon was nursing a slight chill, and wished the friendly help of the boy.

"It's nothing to excite alarm," explained Peyton. "It will soon pass. I suppose exposure caused it. Gordon has not regained his former strength."

"What a brave, uncomplaining, sanguine man he is!" said Mary. "I think it takes a long time to get even a fair idea of Mr. Gordon's merits; but the better one knows him, the higher value does he give to such a character."

"He's the choicest spirit I have ever met among men," was Peyton's enthusiastic reply. "He does n't carry his heart on his sleeve for daws to peck at, but he has the heart of a hundred ordinary folks, and I believe he'd give his life for a friend — yes, even for a foe, if need be — without a moment's hesitation or a single regret."

“ Ah, it’s plain to see that you know something about friendship,” remarked Martha, with kindling spirit.

“ Gordon does n’t need me to sound his praises. He speaks for himself. Look at his devotion to Davie ; why, it’s one of the most beautiful sights I’ve ever seen. Little fellows like your brother are not always companionable, and I don’t think men take to them generally, but Davie’s almost like the apple of his eye. He preferred him to me for company this evening. That’s why I came here instead of staying with Gordon.”

“ Perhaps you’d better go back to the tavern. He may require a service at your hands.” Was there a hint at mischief in the speech of Miss Randolph ?

“ Oh, no, no,” replied Peyton innocently. “ I think he was glad to get rid of me for a time. Did you know that Davie could be as sweet and gentle as a girl in a sick-room ? Why, he’ll wait on Gordon, put his arms around his neck, smooth his hair and pat his hands, fondle him, and tease him with the indefinable art of the veriest coquette.”

“ You don’t think Mr. Gordon suffers on account of his wounds, do you ? ”

“ Why, yes ; he’s far from being himself



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again. And then I fear that he is carrying heavy burdens. He's very reserved, and I never pry into his secrets, but I feel certain that some task is pressing him sore. It's a curious position in which we are placed. I trust him implicitly, but the mystery of the past remains a sealed book. He's a noble gentleman, the best man in all the world, my dearest friend, but I take him simply for what he is. I know that such manhood is the fruit of honorable years. We don't gather figs of thistles."

Peyton returned to the tavern at an early hour to find Gordon and Davie sitting contentedly before the fire.

"Yes, I'm doing well," was the gentleman's answer to Peyton. "Davie has been cheering me up, and driving away the ague. I think he'll make a physician. He won't have to give drugs or herbs, — his mere presence will be like a medicine."

After the child had gone home, the two men talked far into the night. Gordon was restless, and begged Peyton to sit with him. The wood blazed merrily on the hearth, and the play of light filled the room with fantastic images. The world had taken on a sudden appearance of unreality for both men,

and these strange shadows which flitted across the walls, chasing each other into dark corners, and haunting the very brains of the dreamers, added to the weirdness of the hour and the vague disquiet of their souls.

CHAPTER XVI

“TEA DOTH OUR FANCY AID”

THE forefathers and the foremothers of the Revolutionary epoch in America had called tea “a detestable weed,” “a base exotic,” “a rank poison far-fetched and dear-bought,” “an unworthy Indian drink;” nevertheless, the herb resumed its sway in the home of the New Englander on the first day of opportunity.

What traditions are connected with the old-fashioned tea party! — the solid mahogany table, the handsome, spotless web of homespun linen, the curious, delicate china, which a member of the family may, perchance, have brought from Hongkong!

What pride in the heart of the housewife as she set the plates, arranged the cups and saucers, filled the cream pitcher and sugar bowl, — displaying her wealth of dainty or substantial fare!

The bread was white and it was brown. There was golden butter shaped into quaint,

original designs; cheese with snap in its flavor; dried beef cut into thin, crimson pieces; quince sauce, "cheap sass," and raspberry jam; sweet pickles and sour pickles; pound cake, ginger cake, and 'lection cake; apple, mince, tart, and berry pies. And was there not the big pitcher of milk, and the bigger pitcher of cider, never a place remaining for a small pitcher of water?

But how poor and vain such array, did there not appear at the foot of the table the precious pot of tea! For it suggested warmth and sociability; the steam floating elusively through the room appealed to the imagination, not a little sentiment being associated with the grateful aroma.

When Mr. and Mrs. Sherman gave a tea for the two students, they invited the Hardys, the minister and his wife, Miss Hobart, and Mr. and Mrs. Sturges.

They were seated at the table, and the hostess, lifting the steaming piece of china, gently, cautiously, poured the hot liquor into its delicate receptacle.

"Mrs. Humphrey, shall I put cream and sugar into your tea?"

"Cream, I thank you, without sugar," replied the lady, with a grace of manner

which matched the cordiality of Mrs. Sherman.

“Some people are so sweet that they do not need sugar.” The remark evoked quiet laughter.

“Miss Hobart, how will you take your tea?” and the hostess beamed upon the next recipient of her favor.

“Clear, if you please. I like to get the taste of the tea; and you always have such a fine article. Where do you get it?”

The question gave the lady a chance to speak of a friend who had followed the sea for many years.

“My old schoolmate, Samuel Hooker, you know, is captain of a sailing-vessel, and he never returns from China without bringing me a chest of tea. I am sure he gets the best, too, for he was never one to do things in any half-hearted way.”

A little buzz of kindly comment greeted this remark, while the lady continued her questioning of guests in respect to their preferences for tea clear, or tea with sugar and without cream, or without sugar and with cream.

This service over the teapot exhilarated the company so that the temperature of social

life rose higher and higher until it reached the desired point of geniality and decorous enjoyment.

“I have learned to like doughnuts,” said Peyton to Miss Martha, who sat on his right. “I’m thinking what the consequences will be when I return South.”

“Why, you must take a cook with you who knows how to make all these New England goodies.” Mary had overheard the remark, and she answered for her sister.

“You people are a restless race,” — Gordon turned to Martha, — “I’ve seen the New Englander in every part of the land. When I boated it down the Mississippi, there were half a dozen men from Connecticut and Massachusetts on board looking for a fortune. I’ve no doubt that, when the war ends, hundreds and thousands will push for the new territory through which they have passed in their fighting. ‘Westward the course of empire wends its way,’ you know. I’d like to see this country fifty years from to-day.”

“Ah, Mr. Gordon, you speak like a seer.” The host had listened with interest to the gentleman. “The possibilities of our territory are beyond the dreams of the wildest visionary.”

“I believe it; and there are larger possibilities than territorial expansion; I refer to the development of the nation. When France and England fought on this continent two or three generations ago, it was simply a stage in the progress of nations. France stood for one civilization, England for another; and the American Revolution was another stage in the growth of nations. While it was Englishman against Englishman, yet it was the working out of those great principles of liberty which the mother country has championed these centuries. And now when this unhappy quarrel between mother and daughter has been amicably settled, — may God speed the day, — the development of our race life will continue. Ah, Mr. Sherman, it’s a great people — the Anglo-Saxon; I call it the modern Israel among races, the people bringing the inspiration of liberty and righteousness into the nations of the earth.”

“Gordon has fallen upon one of his favorite themes.” Peyton addressed Mr. Sherman. “He’s a real enthusiast on the subject of English-speaking peoples.”

“Yes, I observe that he talks well and wisely. The great work of the world is passing into the hands of our race. And America

is destined to take no mean part in this shaping of affairs."

"This is Martha's receipt for ginger cake," whispered Mary confidentially to Peyton. "Mrs. Sherman borrowed it."

"I thought the cake had a familiar taste," answered the gentleman. "You women in the North know how to make everything." The tone expressed warm admiration.

"Well, we've been forced to learn. We can't keep the slaves that you Southern people do; in fact, there are few slaves left in New England now, — the common sentiment is against the practice, so we children are taught cooking, baking, sewing, darning, spinning, weaving, scrubbing, washing, — all the domestic duties. I suppose you think it degrading," casting a questioning glance into Peyton's face, "but we thrive on work."

"You'd adorn any station or service," he remarked with gallantry. "The charm would not be less on my father's old plantation than in this more independent farm life of the North."

"You flatter us, Mr. Peyton. Is not the fame of the Southern lady spread abroad through the land? Is she not lovely and graceful, a born wit, the soul of hospitality,

spirited and fascinating? No one is more loyal to the South than yourself." There was something of the coquette in this remark.

"Miss Mary, female charms are not confined to narrow limits. The good Lord in his kindness has given every land its fair share, I suppose, unless He's shown partiality to New England, and I sometimes think He has."

The splendor of fine raiment was not essential to Mary's singular beauty, yet she not only loved bright colors and delicate, costly fabrics, but intuition taught her how to drape, twist, shape them until they seemed a part of herself.

"I wonder what you have written to your Southern belles about the girls of the North? I suppose you have told how cold and formal we are, how we dress in chintz and merino or gingham, with a poor, shining black silk for Sundays; how we never dance or play cards, but sit with our knitting or sew on our patchwork, while the men shuffle restlessly in their chairs and do all the talking. I suppose you've said we never go fox hunting or merry-making, but stay at home all the time and spin and weave, or have an occasional quilting party or husking-bee, or some other

tiresome, silly frolic. It must be sadly dull for you in the Land of Steady Habits, Mr. Peyton!"

The conversation at the table had waxed loud and strong, so that Mary's remarks fell simply upon Peyton's ears.

"What an injustice you do me!" he exclaimed reproachfully. "Think you that I could write discourteous or disparaging things concerning friends that have loaded me down with favors? Why, Miss Mary, the days have all been short and swift since I came to New England. A warmer-hearted and more generous people never breathed the breath of life. What care I if people don't sit down to cards or walk a minuet? Life is deeper and broader than the sports with which we amuse ourselves."

"Then you'd give up all the worldly vanities and settle down to plain New England farming, varied with going to meeting twice on Sunday, attending singing-school, and once in a while drinking tea with a neighbor?"

Mary asked the question with assumed sobriety of manner.

"It's a question of company," answered the gentleman, with enthusiasm. "Give me

my friends, and the social amenities would soon be happily adjusted. When I go with the Romans, I do as the Romans do, you know. If they find their sport in straw rides and paring apples to dry, who am I that I should buck against time-honored customs, and introduce new-fangled and foreign modes?"

"Ah, Mr. Peyton, we're all creatures of habit. The fox hunting would come sooner or later, I fear. You'd get tired of the singing-school and the tea party. You'd grow heartsick for a Virginia reel, or one of those boisterous breakdowns of the plantation."

"On my honor, Miss Mary, it's the truth. You're very hard on me. Why, the happiest days of my life have been spent in New England, here in Fairfield, and never a dance or — well, only a few games of cards; and as for fox hunting, of course you don't have it in the North as we do in the South, but that's nothing. I've been with Gordon a few times, and it's lively enough without any of our Southern trimmings and hilarities."

"You'll be saying something rash unless I change the subject," interrupted the young lady, in a tantalizing way. "It would shock

your Virginia friends to know that you like doughnuts and apple pie, that you had a merry time at a quilting party, or that you had learned to drink five cups of strong tea at a sitting."

"How many cups did Doctor Johnson drink? Was it eleven? And they say he kept his complexion."

"I declare, Mr. Peyton, you must be more temperate." The lady pretended to examine his face critically, while the gentleman glowed with as fresh and ruddy a color as often appears upon the human countenance. "I think you are turning saffron. It certainly is the effect of overmuch tea."

"Did I hear Mr. Peyton say that he would like another cup of tea," inquired Mrs. Sherman, who had caught the word "tea" as it was wafted above the din of general conversation.

"Yes, Mrs. Sherman," replied Mary. "Mr. Peyton likes tea so well that he will join our temperance society, and give up other drinks. But he's so modest that I can't persuade him to pass his cup. Here it is;" and the empty piece of china went from hand to hand until the hostess placed it by the teapot.

Gordon was sitting opposite Martha Ran-

dolph, and the talk had been spirited, but he did not fail to note the expansive happiness of Peyton, and the coquettish, captivating ways of the elder sister.

“We’re getting very frivolous, Miss Martha.” Gordon included the other two young people in the remark. “We’ve been invited to a ‘raising,’ a barn frolic, three tea parties, a funeral, and an apple-bee within ten days. It’s a downright waste of time.”

The fair Martha flushed under the sweet courtesies lavished upon her by the gentlemen. The deep blue of her fathomless eyes glinted and shimmered in the play of light.

“But you had never been really introduced into New England society until you settled down in Fairfield this summer. When once you get used to the dissipation, I think you’ll be able to stand the pressure. I suppose you studied hard in Litchfield, so that you did n’t live up to your social privileges.”

“Now you’re making me a laughing-stock,” answered Gordon genially. “We had a party now and then at Judge Reeves’s, or Colonel Tallmadge’s, or Mr. Wolcott’s. Sometimes we went into the country for a little diversion, but we did n’t have the *entrée* of all the society. I think a good many

people were a little afraid of us, — thought we 'd make mischief, probably."

"No wonder," answered Martha. "I know all about you young men in the law school. We heard everything at Miss Pierce's."

"Not everything!" exclaimed Gordon, with an expression of mock dismay. "We 'd never dare show our faces in public. You don't know how naughty and foolish law students can be when they put their hearts to it."

"Well, we heard enough. Are all young gentlemen alike in their taste for mischief?"

"Not at all, not at all," cried Peyton merrily from his side of the table.

"La, me!" cried Mary.

"She's quoting from Dinah now," explained Martha.

"What good young men you are! You're ready to die, are n't you?" Mary drew her face down to its greatest length, and rolled her eyes upward.

The gentlemen laughed.

Mr. Sherman, the minister, and uncle David Hardy had been discussing a convention of the New England States, while the older ladies exchanged receipts for cooking, and bemoaned the hard times.

When the company left the tea table, the

quartette of young folks had the permission of Mrs. Sherman to go into the kitchen for the corn popping and the nut cracking.

“It’s last year’s, I hope!” Mary fingered the popcorn while speaking.

“Of course it is.” This remark was made by little Davie, who, suddenly appearing in the big room, hurried through it to the tea table beyond, the small boy being allowed the privilege of enjoying the good fare after his elders had taken their fill.

“I’ll warrant you we’ll have to teach Mr. Gordon how to shell corn.” Mary was holding a dry ear in her hand. “Now, this is the way,” rubbing a cob across the kernels so that the shining, pointed objects were loosened and made to fall into the dish beneath.

“You’ll ruin those shapely fingers,” observed Gordon, as he reached for the corn and forcibly took it away, giving Mary’s hand two or three pinches. “There, did n’t I tell you so? See the huge red spots?”

“I did n’t think you could be so rude,” looking with reproach into the gentleman’s eyes. “Why don’t you come to my rescue, Mr. Peyton?”

“Well, you know Gordon still thinks him-

self an invalid, — at least when he wishes to be contrary, — and I can't do anything with him. And then he always has his own way. That's one of his defects."

"I like to hear these Southern men talk about folks having their own way," interrupted Gordon. "They're so gentle and yielding, you know, — they never do as they like, of course."

"Give me that spider!" — spoken with authority on the part of Peyton, and addressed to Martha, — "I'll do the popping."

"There, did n't I tell you? What a tone of command he assumes; and he's taken the dish away from your sister. Give me a Southerner for a masterful, not-to-be-gainsaid person!"

Gordon laughed as his friend seized the dish and began to shake it over the bed of ruddy coals that had been heaped together for their service.

The lively popping of the corn filled the room with sharp echoes.

"Why, Peyton, what a famous popper you are!" spoken jocosely; "had experience?"

"I showed him," murmured Davie from the adjoining room. "I'm going to show you how to do it, Mr. Gordon. We can't

swim any more this season, but we'll do a lot of popping."

"Now, who will crack the walnuts?" asked Martha, as a flat stone and the hammer were brought to her.

"I suppose I might as well crack my fingers as anybody else." Gordon stepped over to Mary's side, while Martha carried a bowl to Peyton, in which he poured the snow-white, fluffy corn.

"I'll get the cider," shouted Davie. "I know how to draw it."

Springing away from the table, the boy ran down cellar, a tallow dip in one hand and the great pitcher in the other.

"Oh!" cried Gordon, as the hammer came down with a sting and a snap on his forefinger.

"Hurt you?" inquired Mary, as he raised his finger from the stone and shook his hand like one trying to get loose from some venomous insect.

"What's the matter?" Peyton turned away from his corn popping as he addressed them. "Any bones broken?"

Martha walked rapidly across the room.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Peyton, springing one side, and dropping his dish of corn upon the floor.

Looking toward the young folks in the corner, and neglecting his own task, he had leaned too far into the wide-mouthed fireplace, swishing his big coat skirts into the very flames. Davie entered the room at the moment.

“Hey, you’re afire!” screamed the excited boy, running toward Peyton. The next instant four quarts of cider were dripping down the ample folds of the gentleman’s garment.

“Well, if you don’t beat all boys that ever lived!” exclaimed Mary. “Did anything happen in our family since you were born, Davie, that you failed to have a hand in it?”

Peyton pulled off his coat to see what injury the fire had done, while Gordon had his finger wound with linen. Four quarts of sweet cider were scattered over the immaculate floor of the kitchen — popcorn crackled as hurrying feet crushed it flat beneath their tread — the mirthful spirit that had recently pervaded the room suffered temporary eclipse. Half an hour later, the young people entered the parlor with nuts, popcorn, and cider, which they lavished upon the elder members of the party.

CHAPTER XVII

A NEW ENGLAND RAISING

THERE had been famous balls in the town, years gone by. The mothers and the grandmothers loved to tell about the old-time gayety, the wonderful silks and satins worn, the gem-bespangled buckles, the wigs shining with diamond dust, the enormous chignons, brilliant waistcoats, exquisite laces and ruffles and rosettes, — infinite, beautiful adornment of the person. Their stories inflamed the imagination of the young people, who read with keen delight “Evelina,” and the fashionable classics of the day.

“How I wish we might go to a ball and see the old dances which mother describes, and the new ones Mr. Gordon says are so lovely.”

“Why, Mary,” — the sisters were quilting the rising-sun patchwork which had been put on the frames by Mrs. Randolph, — “you know how bitterly opposed to dancing Mr. Humphrey is.” Martha did not speak with her former severity of manner. Could it be

possible that her rigid views were softened by time and the pleasant reminiscences of the gentlemen, — their constant visitors ?

“ Well, Martha, our minister is a very godly man, the salt of the earth, but ” — she hesitated before whispering her heterodox opinion — “ he does n’t know everything. Mr. Gordon’s a good man, and so is Mr. Peyton, and they dance, and so do a great many of the best people in the world.”

“ Yes, it’s true,” replied the sister reflectively. “ I suppose our bringing up has something to do with the way we look at things. It can’t be such a wicked amusement as some folks think. But there’s another good reason for not having balls these days. People are poor, they have a hard time to get enough to eat and wear, the currency is almost worthless ; I don’t believe you could buy finery in town for love or money ; and who feels like dancing when, as the Federalists say, everything is going to the dogs ? ”

“ But there’ll come a change soon. Mr. Sherman says the convention of New England States called to meet at Hartford in December will do something, and Mr. Gordon told us last night that we were sure to have peace within a few months. Martha,

I'm going to the first ball that comes off, if mother 'll let me." The tone was decisive.

The girls stitched away silently.

"Mary, I have never thought that Mr. Gordon had anything to do with the British government. Of course, he's an English gentleman and a man of means; but I take his word for it that he's simply a partner in the shipping business. It's likely he intends to live in this country always. Why would he study law and make himself so familiar with our affairs, if he did n't expect to stay in America?"

The quiet, reserved Martha, this stiff, prudish younger sister, had caught some portion of Mary's free, merry spirit within the few months past. Her rebukes were now infrequent. The trivialities of social life pleased the young woman. When the gentlemen tarried with them, Martha did not fail in jest or repartee. And all the friends observed a deepening, strengthening life which shone through her rare loveliness of person.

"Mr. Gordon is almost as great a mystery as when" —

"Uncle David tried to introduce him," interrupted Martha, with laughter.

"Yes," continued Mary, sharing her sister's

merriment, "but the mystery clings simply to what you might call the frippery of his life. I think we know the man, the real spirit behind the accessories of his career. He's no spy, or disguised prince, or political trickster. He's as honest as the day is long. When the proper time comes, Mr. Gordon will tell us the story of his career. I can wait with perfect confidence."

Martha lifted her eyes from the quilting, and watched her sister as she talked.

"He's a remarkable man, and there's something more than trade that interests him."

"Why, to be sure," exclaimed Mary roguishly. "I think *we* interest him."

"I suppose you mean Mary Randolph?"

"I mean Martha, too."

A curious flush appeared upon the cheeks of the younger sister, and a strange, unhappy look came to the surface of her eyes.

"Mary, Mr. Gordon is a man of superior mind. A life devoted to trade would never satisfy him. Great ideals are shaping his career, and I venture to say that when the truth becomes known, it will appear that he has lingered in America sustained and inspired by some noble purpose."

“Why, then, does he stay in this little town and pother over the details of a law practice?”

“Why, child, don’t you see that Mr. Gordon has traveled all over the United States? How many times has he spoken of places in the South and the West as well as the North which he has visited; and what a chance to get acquainted with people from every part of the land while a student in the law school! And see how many times he has been called to the shore towns and the large cities since we knew him.”

“That’s because he owns property in ships,” observed Mary.

“You have n’t pierced to the depths of the mystery. It’s because Mr. Gordon is working for some grand, unselfish object, that he’s living the way he does. Why, look at his correspondence. Davie says there is n’t anybody in town that gets as many letters, even Mr. Sherman; and often the postage is much more than twenty-five cents a letter.”

“I don’t see that you throw any light upon the subject,” said Mary. “It may be that he’s an ambassador extraordinary, but I have never detected any signs of it. I think he stays in Fairfield because business is dead,

and he must stay somewhere until it revives. He might just as well stay here as anywhere else, especially when he has a good time and enjoys the society which the town affords."

"Well, that may all be. Time will tell. Now that Mr. Peyton is done with the law school, why does n't *he* go back South? Is he playing Jonathan to Mr. Gordon's David, and lingering here through sheer love and friendship?"

This was badinage.

"Martha, you need n't ask me why Mr. Peyton stays. Let your" —

There was a knock at the door.

"Oh, yes, they're home," shouted Davie. "Can you quilt? Come in and help them."

The boy entered the room, preceding the two gentlemen.

"Ah, it's the rising-sun patchwork being converted into a real bed-cover," observed Peyton. "Good-afternoon, ladies."

The gentlemen bowed; the ladies arose from their chairs and returned the salutations.

"Here are needles," remarked Mary laughingly. "Shall I thread one for you, Mr. Peyton, or can you do it yourself?"

"You ought to see me sew!" exclaimed Davie. Snatching a needle from Martha, the

child ran to the opposite side of the quilt and began to stitch into the yellow muslin.

“David Randolph, you will spoil our quilt. Stop that mischief!” And Martha hurried in pursuit of the child, who, dropping his needle as the sister drew near, scrambled across the floor underneath the gorgeous fabric, and emerged, merry with fun, on the farther side.

“What beautiful stitching!” exclaimed Gordon, bending over the quilt and examining it with the critical eye of an expert in needlework. “Why, it must take you days and days to do it.”

“Oh, we invite the friends to help. All the fine quilters in the village will leave the marks of their skill upon it; and we shall give a return in our best cakes, preserves, and other goodies. You see, we’re starting the work, getting ready for a real, old-time quilting party day after to-morrow. We’ve promised to spend the day on Holland Hill Thursday. They have a barn raising, and we’re to help feed the multitude.”

“And I’m going in the afternoon,” interrupted Davie. “We have great times at a raising; a fellow stuffs himself with food and drink, — the fat of the land.”

“And we’ve been invited,” said Gordon,

nodding and smiling at the boy. "You see," — speaking to the sisters, — "we are really members of society. We shall attend singing-school, I think. I've been told that people in New England were dull to the point of misery because they had no amusements, but now that we are acclimated, we're positively overwhelmed with your gayeties."

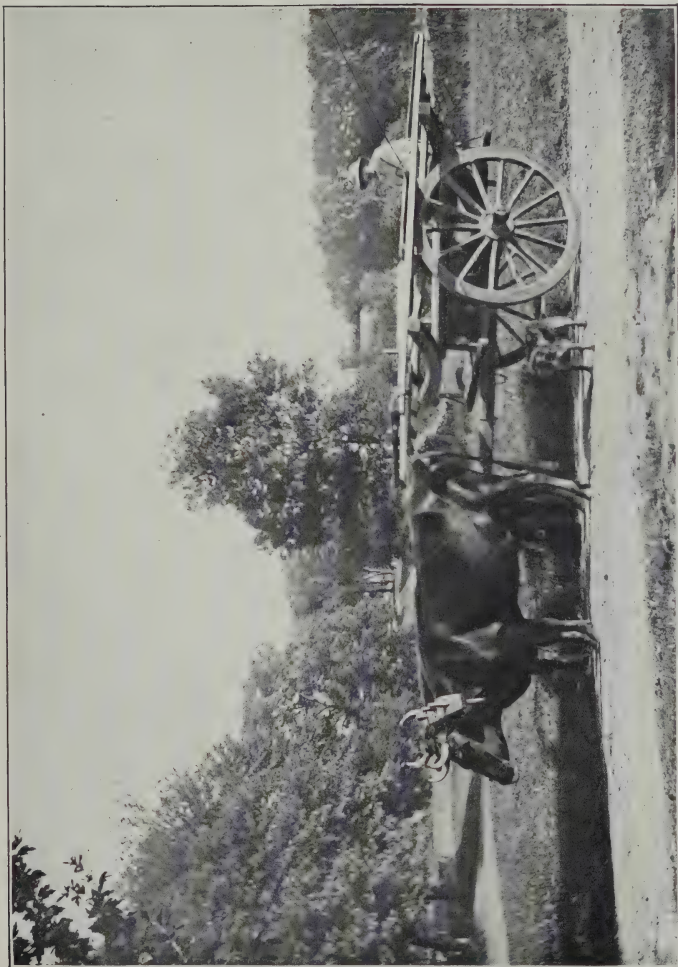
"Don't make sport of us," cried Martha. "We're a sensitive folk."

"'Pon my word and honor," was Gordon's answer, "I'm dead in earnest. I never had a better time in all my life. Why, Mr. Sherman fears that we shall become dissipated and worldly at the rate we are going on. He rails at us in a good-natured way whenever we mention our social activity."

"Well, you ought to attend the 'raising.' It's a very jolly company. The men expect to work and have a good time between spells, while the women prepare the feast and share the sport as opportunity comes."

The following day was warm and hazy. An Indian summer languor pervaded the air, so that energy was at a discount.

Mary and Martha rode to Holland Hill with several other young ladies in an ox cart, perhaps the commonest vehicle used by the



THE COMMONEST VEHICLE

farmers, chaises being few and expensive,—a luxury enjoyed by the favored rich.

At least fifty of the neighbors had gathered to help raise the great barn.

The solid stone foundations appeared three feet above the ground, massive enough to bear the weight of half a dozen such buildings. They set prime importance upon durability in the generations passed.

The carpenters had been preparing for the great event these many days. Oak timbers, cut with axe and adze, trimmed down to fair proportions, were lying to the right and to the left. Sills, girts, braces, rafters, posts, plates, and a vast amount of lumber covered the ground, so that scant space remained for the sole of a man's foot.

It was a time when wit and wisdom, jest and earnest, work and play, sly tricks, rude speeches, rough shouting, boisterous doings, and occasional quarrels mingled indiscriminately. The farm lads had their jokes, the carpenters were lively with oversight and directions, the old men told how things were done a better way fifty years ago, and the women adventured into the scene of action to bring welcome drinks, or bind up pinched fingers, or bathe with liniment bruised heads or limbs.

First the heavy oaken sills were mortised and tenoned together, the cross-sills worked into the main ones, gaining in the floor joists or timbers. Then followed the framing of the corner and centre posts with the main and the short girts, the braces and the plates where the rafters rest, the great girts, the gallus posts, and the rafters.

They were now ready for the raising, — no ordinary task, for the material was all of the heaviest and most substantial kind.

They pinned one section together, — two main posts, one centre post, one great joist, one great girder, two short posts, and four braces. What cries and heavings and liftings and turmoil as the bents came into their right places!

“Now we will plumb it, and stay it!” shouted the head carpenter.

Willing hands brought the temporary braces, which they deftly put into the needy places, and one part of the task was ended.

They treated a second section in the same mode, and a third, the work now being well under way.

A wild huzza from Davie was the signal for rest. The men hastened over to the large trough in the yard, washed their hands

in the clear, running spring water, and then filled the big kitchen, the back porch, and the clean woodshed with their lively company.

Both Gordon and Peyton had joined heartily in the morning's task, making themselves agreeable to all alike, keeping up a running fire of jest or story.

"If you hain't about the two friendliest sort of foreign chaps I ever knew," said one back-country farmer to the young lawyers. "If you r'a'ly lived in these here pairts, I sh'd think you were runnin' for office, and I'll be doggoned if I would n't vote for you."

"Why should n't they be friendly?" inquired Mary Randolph, who was passing a big pan of bread and butter, made appetizing by thin slices of delicious ham.

"Wal, now," continued the farmer, looking inquisitively toward Gordon, "do they have raisin's where you come from?"

"They raise Cain, probably." Peyton came to the rescue of his friend. "But such good turns as you New England farmers serve each other are not common in every part of the world."

"Take a piece of fried chicken," interrupted Davie, bringing a dish heaped high with this favorite Connecticut delicacy.

“Here’s to your health!” cried one of the farmer lads, neighbor to the Hardys.

The host was filling cups and glasses with strong milk punch.

A “raising” became an occasion when liquor flowed with the freedom of a spring freshet. Mr. Humphrey had preached against the practice, but men still clung to the old way tenaciously.

It was a generous feast provided by the ladies of Holland Hill. Stacks upon stacks of bread were consumed, while slices of beef and mutton, pickled tongue and fresh spare-rib, great dishes of baked beans decorated with crisp pork, several oyster pies, and innumerable pickles disappeared down capacious throats.

The various pies tasted not less toothsome; and with what dexterity the men held them in their hands and carried the big pieces to the mouth, never losing a flake of crust or drop of juice.

Enormous pails of cider had been set in convenient places, so that the feasters might drink at their leisure.

Cake finished off the informal meal.

“That’s a new receipt for gingerbread,” observed Martha, as she gave the two gentle-

men a taste of the brittle stuff. "And this is Mrs. Burr's very best fruit cake. There's a suspicious odor to it, which suggests that it stands in the liquor closet."

"I've often heard it said that you people in Connecticut did n't really know how to laugh."

As Peyton made the remark to the elder sister, laughter resounded on every side.

"Why, I never saw a merrier or more jovial party. I'm ready to attend a 'raising' every day of the week," said Gordon.

The merry lads indulged in wild pranks, while the elder members of the company filled their cups for a last potation before the return to work.

It was a little after one o'clock, — the men once more being scattered over the ground and amid the skeleton timbers which stood out against the sky.

A slight wind had risen during the hour, so that when work was resumed new difficulties faced the workers. And it must not be forgotten that many of the feasters had eaten and drunk with such liberality that heads lacked clearness and steps became unsteady.

Two sections were to be raised by different

parties at the same time, and then these two, being pinned to the others, would make a solid, unyielding frame.

“Now we are ready, all together!” shouted the man in authority. “Up they go, my men, — clean as a whistle!”

The two sections stood upright, waiting for pins and braces to make them sure and fast.

A dozen men had climbed upon different parts of the frame; some were walking along the beams, others putting on the plates for the rafters, a few attending to the gallow work. Little Davie, nimble as a cat, sprang across one of the girders.

“Davie, come down!” shouted Gordon. “The wind will blow you to Ballahac.”

Gordon was alarmed, but he did not wish to frighten the little fellow.

Davie waved his hand airily, and walked along the dizzy height, as Mary and Martha first saw him in his dangerous position.

Nearly every man was intent upon the particular part of the work that he was sharing, and the interest in the binding of these last sections to the gaunt frame was great. Once pinned and braced, made an integral part of the huge skeleton, and the chief peril was

past; the winds might wrestle with the timbers to their hearts' content, and the oaken frame would remain stanch and firm.

But this critical moment was the one which the winds chose for a final riotous assault upon the uneasy posts, beams, girts, and braces. Swooping down upon the skeleton structure with the fury of invisible, malignant demons, they swayed the two unbraced and pinless sections back and forth like so much pasteboard. Would the tottering pieces of timber regain their equilibrium?

A score of hoarse voices chased each other confusedly through the air.

"Look out!" "Get down!" "Run for your life!" "Stand firm!" "Hold fast!" "It's giving way!" "Jump, men, jump!" "There it goes!" A bedlam of mixed noises, and then breathless silence on the part of the men, who stood chained to the spot.

Back and forth the two sections swayed once again, — the workmen with pins and braces had deserted it; then the winds twisted the timbers as human hands might twist soft and yielding cords, and, gathering their strength, hurled the indistinguishable mass against the other sections of the frame.

Peyton had seen the awful peril of little

Davie, and ran nigh the post to which the child had instinctively clung.

“Jump into my arms, boy, jump into my arms!” stretching them forth in wild entreaty.

There was the terrific crash of groaning, snapping, falling wood, the mocking roar of the sudden winds, a few broken sounds of the human voice, and a dozen men lay upon the earth amid the mass of shapeless lumber.

A moment—an eternity—and men rushed forward to the rescue of their comrades. Peyton and little Davie were found locked in each other’s arms, thrown against a heap of stones, bespattered with blood, and senseless. One farmer had a broken leg, another a broken arm; all were sorely bruised, while underneath a corner post one of the carpenters lay dead.

Gordon dragged Davie and Peyton beyond the débris, and then set to work with the sisters to bring them back to consciousness. Washing away the blood, chafing their hands, and pouring restoratives down their throats, signs of a return to life showed themselves.

“Ah, Davie, it was a brave jump,” were the first words spoken by Peyton.

Tears ran down the cheeks of the sisters as they lavished kisses upon the boy.

“But it was very naughty for you to climb the timbers, Davie. Why did you do such a thing?”

“For the fun of it,” was the reply, followed by a swift shadow on the face and a pitiful moan.

“Where are you hurt, Davie? Tell me, where is the pain?”

“It’s my arm and my side,” he said feebly.

The arm was broken, and the side roughly bruised.

“Thank you, Peyton.” The boy smiled in his sunny, genial way. “You saved my life, did n’t you?”

A sudden twinge of pain drove the smile from his face, and drew pathetic groans from his tightened lips.

An hour later they carried him to his home.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN WHICH THEIR FORTUNES ARE TOLD

THE war on land had been generally disastrous to American arms, our troops facing humiliation after humiliation; but victories on the sea redeemed the good name of the United States, adding fresh lustre to the national fame.

Restlessness in the East increased with the lengthening of the unequal conflict, so Massachusetts took the initiative in calling a convention of New England States. The object, as stated in the invitation, was "to devise, if practicable, means of security and defense which may be consistent with the preservation of our resources from total ruin, and adapted to our local situation, mutual relations and habits, and not repugnant to our obligations as members of the Union."

Connecticut responded to the call, and her legislature appointed seven strong, representative men to sit with other New Englanders in council upon public affairs. Among the number was Roger M. Sherman.

“ Will you explain to me the action of your legislature ? ”

Peyton was talking with Mr. Sherman, a member of the upper House, on his return to Fairfield.

“ Well, sir, the United States has in her forts and armies about twenty-seven thousand effective men ; of these only thirteen hundred are employed in New England.”

“ Yes, I’ve made a note of that fact,” observed Peyton thoughtfully.

“ The war has been in operation two years and a half. We have a seacoast (I mean New England) of seven hundred miles to protect, and, with the exception of the thirteen hundred men referred to, we have had the aid of no military force from the United States. By internal taxes, all others having become unproductive by reason of the war, the national government has raised large sums from the people in our territory.”

“ Yes, I know that to be true.”

“ Direct taxation,” continued Mr. Sherman, warming to his subject, “ is now the only resource of the state governments, and this has been carried to as great an extreme in Connecticut as can be sustained. The banks, which have furnished all our currency,

either withhold their accommodations or stop payment, and the people are embarrassed by a general stagnation of business. Mr. Gordon has been made to feel the force of this statement."

"Yes, I have heard him remark upon it."

"Powerful fleets and armies lie off our coast, and are making or threatening invasions in all parts of our defenseless seaboard. Commodore Decatur and his squadron have taken refuge in the waters of Connecticut, and attracted a powerful concentration of the enemy's forces on our borders. Castine has fallen into the hands of the British."

The member from the upper House gave Peyton a keen, searching look in order to judge concerning the impression which he was making.

"Now, sir, under all these disadvantages, the New England States are obliged to protect themselves by their own militia, at their own expense. The expenses of this State greatly exceed her resources. The duration of the war cannot be foreseen, and our credit is exhausted. Attempts have been made to borrow money, but without adequate success. The national Constitution prohibits the emission of bills of credit. In this extremity, our

legislature, convened at New Haven, has received from the legislature of Massachusetts a communication proposing a convention of delegates from the New England States to consult on the adoption of measures for the common safety. This communication was referred to a joint committee of both Houses, General Henry Champion and myself being appointed from the upper House. He was chairman of the committee, and I drew the report, recommending a compliance with the proposal made by the State of Massachusetts, and assigning the reason at length. Seven delegates are appointed from Connecticut, and I have the honor to be one of the number."

"Thank you, Mr. Sherman, for this lucid statement."

A few days later the young men were sitting in the child's sick-room.

"You will go to Hartford?"

"Yes," replied Gordon to Miss Mary. "You see, I can safely leave Davie in your charge and Peyton's," — he smiled faintly, — "and there are reasons for my going."

"I think Davie is doing very well. Is n't he the cheerfulest, happiest prisoner of circumstances in all the world?"

“The dear little hero!” exclaimed Gordon in tones of deep feeling.

“He was asking for you this morning,” remarked the sister. “You and Mr. Peyton are the very breath of his life. When you’re away he withers and droops, but the instant of your coming he seems fresh as a June morning.”

The child’s arm had been put into splints, his bruises doctored, everything done for his good and comfort, immediately after the accident. But Davie was delicate, — a wonderful mind, a great spirit in a small, stunted body. During the years of comradeship with Gordon and Peyton, it did not appear that an inch had been added to his stature. The boy consumed his vitality in an extraordinary, unrestrained liveliness of mind and body.

They made uncle David’s study into the sick-room, and here the family life now centred. The walls were lined with books, a big-mouthed fireplace swallowed up great sticks of seasoned oak, a large mahogany table standing in the middle of the room held papers, inkhorn, quills, a stuffed owl, half a dozen rosy-cheeked apples, a plate of chestnuts, two or three simple remedies, and the priceless treasures given the boy by his

loving friends, — a knife, a silver chain, a beautiful miniature, and a picture-book lately come from London.

The little bed with its snow-white coverlet leaned against the table, placed, in answer to the child's whim, so that he could reach the things which pleased him, and watch hour after hour the marvelous play of the fire. A few stiff-backed chairs and a low workstand for the girls completed the furnishings of the room.

“ Good-morning, my cheery young man ! ” Gordon entered the study, bringing with him the brightness of the clear, bracing day.

“ I heard your step on the porch, ” piped up the blithe voice of the boy. “ I knew it was you. Uncle David drags his feet along, Mr. Jackson used to steal into the house so you hardly heard him, and Peyton walks light as a feather ; but you put your feet down as much as to say, ‘ Here am I, sir ! ’ ”

The child's eyes twinkled merrily as he spoke.

“ Davie, you have wonderful discernment. If I did n't think you were to be a doctor, I should say that fortune-telling might afford an opportunity for the exercise of your gifts. Suppose, now, I consult you on my future prospects ? ”

Davie was delighted with the humor of the thing.

“Give me your hand,” said the boy, with assumed air of mystery, pinching the proffered member with his white, fragile fingers, and concentrating his gaze upon it.

“You’re a cross between Scotch and English.” An amused smile played over the face of the gentleman. “You’ve had a good bringing up, and are a real, true gentleman.” Gordon bowed his acknowledgments, and the fortune-teller continued. “You’ll be very rich one day, a great deal of property’s coming to you.” Gordon was suddenly grave. “You’ll do a great deal of good with your money, and make many people happy; happy as the day is long.”

“Thank you, my wise, sweet prophet,” exclaimed the man tenderly.

“There, don’t interrupt,” — spoken with a comical air of authority, — “the best is yet to come,” smiling with the joy of a great, deep emotion stirring in his soul; “you’ll marry your true love, and — and” — it was hard to find the right words to end off the story — “and forever after hold your peace.”

Davie’s laugh rang merrily through the house. There was a strange, beautiful light

in Gordon's eyes as he joined in the mirth, while Mary leaned down and kissed the child upon his pale lips.

"We shall see, my boy." The gentleman had withdrawn his hand from the hold of Davie, and was standing at the foot of his cot. "I shall be afraid of you, if all you say comes true."

"Shall I tell your fortune, Mary?" The boy looked mischievously into the face of his sister.

"No, tell Martha's. Here she comes."

"Come, Miss Martha, and hear your fortune. Our gypsy has told mine, and it sounds like a real fairy tale."

Martha smoothed the brother's hair, and lavished gentle arts upon him.

"Yes, I see it all," cried Davie, seizing her hand and keeping it close under inspection. "This is a very dear, loving, tender child. She will grow up to be a real lady. Most everybody will love her, but there's one that will love her with all his might, and he'll carry her off and put her in a beautiful cage on a hill, and her friends will all go to see her, and such good times as we'll have, and we'll all be happy as our hearts can hold. Is n't that a nice fortune?"

The blushing Martha was fondling the child, trying to hush his jolly, harmless prattle.

“How delightfully indefinite! Why, Davie, you’d *make* your fortune, — nobody would have to tell it, — if you went through the land foretelling such pleasant, charming things.”

“Now,” said Gordon, “it is your chance,” turning to the older sister. “Our gypsy may not be in the mood to-morrow.”

Mary was standing by the fire, tracing the shy faces that appeared in fantastic tongues of flame as they rioted against the dark background.

“I’m afraid to have my fortune told. The others have been so good and beautiful that a third must break the record.”

“That is not fair,” exclaimed Gordon. “Here, Davie, take this coin,” slipping a small gold piece into his hand; “will it pay for the three?”

“Now, Mary, it’s paid for, and the fortune-teller wants to give us the worth of Mr. Gordon’s money.”

As Martha spoke, she drew the fickle, coquettish sister over to Davie’s bed.

“I read all sorts of curious, lovely things,” said the boy, turning his wise gaze upon her

classic hand. "This lady is well educated, comes of a good family, has a strain of witch blood in her, so that she bewitches some folks" —

"You're a bad gypsy to say such things," interrupted the girl, snatching away her hand. "I don't want my fortune told."

"But you must have it; he's earning his living." Gordon spoke whimsically, as he caught the lady's hand and gave it to the child.

"How you bother me," said Davie, with comical severity. "I can't see into the future when you talk so much." He was studying the lines. "The lady has an awful temper, but she gets along with it very well — better than her friends do, sometimes." Again the boy's merry laugh rang through the room, while he retained a hold upon the reluctant hand. "She has many virtues, and only a few vices, like teasing, fl—"

"You're a bad, bad gypsy, I say," struggling gently to release herself from Davie. "I won't hear another word," with assumed anger.

"Oh, yes, you will," said Gordon, standing close by her side, and laying his powerful hand upon her free one, so that she was a

helpless prisoner; "the best is still to come. It'll be worth the money, hey, Davie?"

"This child," continued the boy, heedless of the break, "will live in a beautiful land, and servants will wait upon her, and she'll make a slave of the fine gentleman, her husband; but they'll be gay as the birds that nest in the trees, and they'll try to do right by everybody, and give Davie Randolph a real pony to ride on, and they'll have everything that heart can wish, and" — hesitating a moment in order to recall a quotation which Peyton had repeated several times in Davie's hearing — "love alters not with his brief hours and weeks."

"I told you it would be something worth hearing; and there's Peyton coming." Gordon caught sight of his comrade as he passed the window. "Davie must tell his fortune, too."

"Did n't I say his step was light as a feather?" laughed the boy, as the newcomer entered the room.

"It's your turn next," remarked Gordon, after greetings, and the boy's role of gypsy had been explained. "Give him a gold coin and see what will come of it."

"He's been paid already," said Martha,

trying to push away the hand containing the piece of money.

“Thank you, madam!” cried Davie. “That’s a nice way to treat a gypsy after he’s done well by you.” He was fumbling the shining bit of metal which Peyton had given him. “This youth” — following out the lines in the gentleman’s hand — “will have his ups and downs. Poor fellow,” — the boy’s eyes gleamed with fun, — “he’s always trying to save somebody’s life, while he’s lost his own.”

“Gospel truth,” exclaimed Gordon. “Go on, gypsy.”

“How can I go on when you stop me with rude skits? He’s a fairly good man, — not too good.” Davie’s brow was wrinkled with thought. “Not good enough to die, you know, but just good enough to live.” The remark was greeted with laughter. “There’s a boy that loves him as well as if he was” — the little lips framed the word brother, then there came a mischievous twist, and the fortune-teller continued — “loves him as well as if he was his father.”

Gordon shook his sides with merriment, in which the girls joined, while the object of their sport pretended to be highly incensed.

“You’re a downright fraud. I’ve no confidence in you. Give me back my money, gypsy!”

“But everything will come out right. This man will get his life back one day, and then won’t he be happy; and how he’ll spend money, and have a grand time, and go to balls with his wife, and hunt foxes with a friend from the North, and be governor of the State, and live in great style. Then we’ll all go to visit him and stay a year. Have n’t you got the worth of your money?” and the child looked wistfully into the sympathetic face of his devoted, loving friend.

“It’s too good to be true, gypsy,” answered Peyton, with infinite tenderness. “I don’t deserve such fortune.”

“But truth is stranger than fiction,” observed Gordon. “I shall believe all that the fortune-teller has said.”

“And so shall I!” “And I!” exclaimed the light-hearted sisters.

“Davie did n’t say that I’m going to Hartford, but I suppose we could n’t expect a gypsy to know everything and go into all the details of a man’s life.”

“No, I reckon we would n’t like to have him get quite so far as that,” said Peyton.

“ He might say things that would make us shiver.”

“ But you’ll come back in a few days ? ” inquired the child anxiously.

“ Yes, Davie ; and I leave Mr. Peyton here to see that you don’t run away while I am gone. Torture him all you please, and make him step lively when there’s anything wanted. Remember you said he had a light step, light as a feather. I never saw a feather step, but I suppose you know exactly how light that is.”

“ Will you write me a real letter ? ” asked the boy, smiling at the jest of his friend. “ Mr. Peyton wrote to me last summer when you stayed in New York and fought the burglars.”

“ Why, of course I will.”

“ Do you think you’ll have another adventure ? ”

“ What says our fortune-teller ? ”

The boy looked wise.

“ Mr. Gordon will stay a few days in Hartford,” — this was the prophecy, — “ and on his coming back will be lost, in the snow, I think, and we’ll find him after many days. There, I’m tired now, and the gypsy has gone.”

Davie put the right hand underneath his head, and turned to gaze at fitful pictures shifting across the fire on the hearth.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WAR-HAWKS SEIZE A VICTIM

PARTY feeling ran high when the Hartford Convention met on the fifteenth of December, 1814. Not only was New England in a ferment, but this darkest hour of war filled many patriot souls with awful forebodings. While the purpose of the meeting was fairly stated, and the stern necessity for New England to protect herself against foreign invasion impressed the sons of her soil, yet strange fears lurked in the minds of a minority, or they chose to twist facts and use for political capital their hatred of the movement.

The men chosen by the States to represent their respective constituencies were eminent and well-equipped citizens. With heavy hearts, they assembled to devise means for the help of a distressed and suffering people.

Mr. George Cabot, of Boston, was unanimously chosen president, and Mr. Theodore Dwight, of Hartford, not a member of the convention, secretary.

Rules of procedure having been adopted, a committee reported a general project of such measures as the convention was called to discuss, and the delegates forthwith entered upon their work.

The sessions were veiled with secrecy.

Gordon found lodgings in a private house. He had no part or lot in the mysterious convention, but it was evidently his purpose to meet the delegates in a social way.

“And what brings you to Hartford?”

The speaker was Dana, Jackson's second in the duel. He and Gordon met on the main street.

“I will put the same question to you.”

The two men regarded each other with curiosity.

“Well, I'm here to squeeze information out of the delegates to this infamous Hartford Convention.”

Dana was a rank Democrat, rabid to the point of fanaticism, and Connecticut was his native State.

“I'm here to have my wits brightened by some friendly association with Hartford wits.”

“That's a sane object,” was the reply. “No doubt you need it. I suppose you've

become acquainted with the traitors sitting behind the closed doors of the State House?"

"Yes," answered Gordon, with provoking serenity. "And a superb company of cultivated gentlemen they are. It's a great pleasure to meet so much culture and intelligence. I am reading in the office of Mr. Sherman, a member of the convention."

"Ah, then, I suppose you are posted upon the run of affairs."

"Well, sir, since the sessions are secret, according to your own statement and as a matter of fact, it is safe to say that you know quite as much about their deliberations as I. I doubt, however, if there is a single member of this honorable body who will disclose anything until released from the pledge of secrecy."

"To think," exclaimed Dana, "that New England has come to this pass, — the New England of the Revolution! Why, if these men had their deserts, they'd be put behind prison bars; and yet there are people who speak of them as the flower of Eastern civilization, — bright, particular stars in our firmament! What shameful mockery!"

"This is interesting," observed Gordon. "Several of these men I have known for

years; some of them intimately. I would as soon think of questioning the integrity of George Washington or your beloved Governor Trumbull of Revolutionary fame."

Dana gazed with offensive intensity upon the speaker.

"I've no doubt that is your opinion," — notes of passion vibrating through his reply, — "but who cares what you and men of your ilk think? The kind of patriotism represented by this convention is the kind that would make us bend the knee to England, and submit without complaint to her damnable abuses. There ought to be enough Salisbury iron mines in the East to bury the whole crew of Federal traitors, and free the country from their infernal misdoings."

The street talk of these two men was typical of the current discussion in Hartford and all New England. Neighbor hostile to neighbor, families split into contending factions, churches and communities divided and fighting a rough war of words, broils in public places, feuds breaking out in private assaults, old-time friends flinging hard names at each other when they passed on the highway, — this was the social condition which prevailed in the East.

“Did you see the soldiers circle around the State House to the tune of the ‘Rogue’s March,’ and din their cries of traitor into the ears of the convention?” cried Dana gleefully. “It must have been soothing to their spirits.”

There were days when the excitement waxed very hot in Hartford, — when a fear of physical violence filled some hearts. But the sessions of the convention continued in their quiet, well-ordered way, and the delegates refused to see or hear the fanatical hatred which broke forth into public expression.

It became evident to Gordon after the first days that he was watched. Did he call upon Mr. Cabot or Mr. Otis, did he walk with Mr. Goodrich or Mr. Prescott, did any of the gentlemen pay their respects to him, he was sure to see a distant, suspicious figure. It seemed absurd to the gentleman. Why should a spy dog him? And what ends would be gained, for it was impossible to overhear his conversation? So Gordon concluded that it was meant for annoyance.

The letter promised to Davie was written the second week of the convention, and it spoke of Gordon’s return to Fairfield the following Saturday.

Leaving Hartford before daylight, the traveler held his horse down to an easy gait, while he gave free rein to his own thoughts and fancies.

What a perplexing situation! Gordon had learned to love the country in which he was passing the years of his young manhood. The poverty, distress, bitterness, hostility, divisions, which he closely observed, were little less than personal to himself. These things ought not to be; a land with such possibilities, a people cherishing the best impulses of their race, facing abuse, disaster, and ruin.

The peace commissioners had been consulting at Ghent these many weeks. Gordon was hopeful that the happy end of war drew nigh; still, the enmities increased, the difficulties did not seem to lessen, and the way to good feeling faded like a mirage.

The opposition to this Hartford assembly was a case in point. Here were twenty-six men, — honest, loyal, wise, the peers of the nation's best and bravest, scholars, orators, business men, statesmen, — sons of Revolutionary heroes, who had inherited the noblest traditions of self-sacrificing service, sincere and devoted lovers of country, — now mocked,

satirized, reviled, cursed, threatened, hated, called all the mean and scurrilous names that human ingenuity was able to devise, defamed and execrated like the veriest scum of earth. Did it not make the heart of a true man bleed ?

And Gordon was reflecting upon the course of the mother country. Here was a people — bone of her bone, flesh of her flesh, asserting the same principles that had given vitality to English civilization these later centuries — suffering shameless cruelty at the hands of the nation which should be closest and dearest to America. What ignoble spirit had seized the mother land, and prevailed in her councils, that her ships should override justice, that her sons should play the bully and maltreat their brothers across the sea, that selfishness and passion should gain the ascendant ?

The bright sunshine fell athwart the gem-tipped trees, and shed its glory upon vast, beautiful fields of spotless snow, but the traveler saw not the marvelous landscape. The crisp air, the nipping wind, the quiet farmhouses along the road, the scattered villages and towns, — none of these things won his attention.

There were other thoughts, also, than those

which concerned struggling America or overbearing England, — thoughts upon a home and the little circle that gathered beneath its shelter in Fairfield.

The traveler rested in New Haven, then pushed toward the setting sun. His mind now turned to boyhood days, and the early struggles. Dark shadows appeared upon his face. As the evening hastened on, and he drew nearer to his goal, there came a change in his expression. He was thinking of little Davie, the spell of whose magic lingered upon him; of quaint, generous, amusing uncle David; of Martha, the true child of the North, with her wondrous blue eyes, soft, golden hair, and beautiful shining face, often touched with rare tints of the rose; of Mary, blithe as the sunshine, her mirthful spirit creeping into telltale eyes, the bewitchment of every mood and motion pressing one into deeper and more helpless slavery. He dreamed his day-dream of happiness over and over again, until all doubt, war, anxiety, trouble, slipped down below the horizon, like the hidden, far-away sun, now set beyond the thick clouds.

In these hours of reverie and meditation, the traveler had been as one born blind to the world about him. The gathering gloom of

the night was unnoted. Crossing the ferry of the Ousatonic, he continued the solitary way, still absorbed with his own thoughts, careless of surroundings, simply bent upon the one object of desire. Was his love honored? Did like enduring passion burn in the soul of Mary Randolph?

And these thoughts were the last that haunted him as he plunged through the increasing gloom.

Without one word of warning, unprepared and unresisting, Gordon was thrown from his saddle. Had the horse stumbled? Did some obstacle suddenly present itself? Was it a hand that grasped the bridle and slipped the girth from its place? The man lay unconscious by the roadside.

When he came to himself, thick darkness prevailed. Reaching forth his hands, they touched a rough pallet and the rude wall of a hut. Did he hear low voices, sound of crackling wood in some near-by room? Slowly, confusedly, he drifted back into dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH A MAID RESCUES A MAN

ON Sunday morning Gordon's horse came riderless into Fairfield, and the fact was reported to Peyton.

Frequent quarrels, arising from political animosity, brought in their wake crime after crime.

"I believe that Mr. Gordon has met with foul play," exclaimed Martha, when she heard the news. "Something ought to be done at once."

But it was Sunday — winter — and the uncertainty connected with the affair dazed people.

The horse showed no signs of haste or violence, and his bridle was in its place, the saddle alone being lost.

"It's my opinion," said one of the villagers, "that when the gentleman stopped at some place his horse grew impatient, and made the rest of the trip by himself."

"Quite likely, quite likely," was the reply.

On Monday, Peyton and a fellow reader from another law office in town started for New Haven. Making inquiries along the way, they traced Gordon through Milford, west of the Ousatonic. He was last seen by a farmer in the gloom of the evening.

Up and down the highways between Milford and Bridgeport did the young men pass, following every clue, questioning all people; but the search was fruitless. And this continued five anxious days.

Down near the edge of the sea, on a point of land thickly studded with a variety of evergreen trees, a rough cabin had once been reared. Buried in this lonely covert, it had long since been deserted, or given over to the free use of stray fishermen. It was built of logs, the cracks and crannies filled in with plaster, the interior being divided into a fair-sized living-room and a bedroom.

To this obscure retreat Gordon's captors had taken him, and here he spent his days and nights in solitary confinement.

They gave him food to eat, water to drink, and clothes to shield him from the weather, but he was fastened by strong cords to the old bedstead on which he reclined. No windows let the light of day into his dank quar-

ters, the only good cheer which came to him being that afforded by a roaring, boisterous fire in the adjoining room, the grateful heat penetrating even to his remote corner.

His captors talked among themselves quite freely through the night-watches, and while their tones were generally low, so that it was impossible for him to keep the thread of conversation, yet, in sheer forgetfulness, they often raised their voices, the copious draughts of flip — Gordon heard the hot iron sizz and sputter as it was thrust into heady cider — unloosing the tongues of the men, and making them careless in speech.

“I’m for putting the fellow out of the way; hanging is too good for him.”

This was the first sentence which the prisoner heard after his wits returned to him. It might have been a day, two days, a week, since the kidnapping.

“And run the risk of a murderer’s noose, hey?” huskily whispered a second member of the band.

“You’re a coward, Sam!” was the reply. “Do you suppose any Connecticut jury would convict a man of murder while in the act of serving his country a good turn, — walking in the path of plain duty?”

Laughter followed the remark.

“I say take him in the sloop across to Long Island, and put him where he can't do any mischief. I know the men who would hold him in safe keeping.”

“But if he's an agent of the British government, and comes here to foment rebellion, the devil ought to be strung up sky high.”

“Jackson says he's an out-and-out spy, — worse than John Henry, — a smooth, well-spoken chap, nosing into everybody's business, hobnobbing with the blanked Federalists of the State, — egging them on to their infernal fight against the administration, — hand and glove with all the traitors of the section.”

“Jackson's not the man to trust in every case,” laughed a third speaker. “I'm half inclined to think that jealousy has more to do with Jackson's hatred of this fellow than politics.”

“Oh, you're on the fence five days of the week, anyway,” was the answer. “A pretty girl can twist you around her finger. If she's a Federalist,” with an oath, “you veer like a weathercock.”

“You lie!” cried the man addressed.

“Shut up your quarreling!” whispered the head of the gang gruffly.

There was a dull pain in the head of the prisoner; the dazed condition had not altogether passed.

“I’m getting tired of staying in this dismal hole.” These were the first words of the second conversation overheard by Gordon. “They say that men are scouring the country. As like as not they’ll stumble upon this shanty.”

“What if they do?” was the reply. “They’d never dare to harm us. The little game that we are playing would tickle folks.”

“You’re a fool, Sam. Waylaying travelers is not a joke that people enjoy.”

“I wish you fellows would say what’s to be done with this sly Britisher. We can’t stay here many days.”

“Put him under the ice of the inlet,” suggested a hoarse voice. “The body will float out with the tide, and we are well rid of dirty rubbish.”

“That’s not a bad idea,” exclaimed two of the captors.

“You may do it, I won’t,” said the timid member of the party. “I agreed to help take the fellow, but I never bargained to murder him. His blood be upon your heads.”

That was all Gordon heard the second night.

“If you’re going to put him out of the way, get clear of this country,” whispered a newcomer on the third night of the captivity. “His friend Peyton and half a dozen men from Fairfield have been riding over the town on their wild-goose chase, and I advise you to haul up anchor and sail away. Peyton, you know, is a very fair sort of a Democrat, but if he thought that any of his Democratic allies in this State had a hand in harming this man Gordon, he’d raise all the foul fiends to pay for it.”

This comforted the prisoner. If his captors tarried with him in the hut a few days longer, help was sure to come. And that was the burden of his prayer.

“To-morrow night, with the ebb of the tide.”

Gordon caught the words on this fourth evening of his captivity.

“To-morrow night, with the ebb of the tide.”

Did it mean that he was to be knocked on the head, then pushed underneath the ice, then float out, an ugly, repulsive corpse, into the sea?

He gave the cords which held him a vicious

wrench, but they simply pressed their torture the deeper into his flesh.

The jollity in the other room increased with the rise of the wind. It was a rough night, for a thaw had set in, and the rain pelted the low roof with pitiless riot.

“Here’s to the consternation of the infamous Hartford Convention,” shouted one of the revelers.

“Here’s to the damnation of its members, traitors to their native land.”

There was a sharp clicking of glasses.

“Here’s to the glory of the American navy.”

“Here’s to the infernal regions with every English ship which sails the seas.”

Laughter, groans, more clicking of glasses, the shuffling of feet, boisterous, indistinguishable talk.

Half an hour later, a significant hush stole through the cabin. The eastern storm still beat against the shivering timbers with cruel force, the gale sounding its wild, weird minstrelsy through the restless forest and across the high heavens.

Did the unruly sprites of the air shove open the outer door and chase each other with mock anger through the mean hut?

Hark! had one of the revelers awaked from his debauch and pushed within the room where Gordon lay bound hand and foot, a sleepless, watchful captive?

The man was startled by a stealthy footfall near his side. Peering into the shades, he saw a form limned against the dim light which crept through chinks of the partition.

A hand touched his face.

Did it mean that one of his captors had chosen this hour to dispatch him? Was he to be strangled, and the body committed to the flowing tide?

He might shout, but who would hear his cries? The captors.

He longed to fight, and make them pay dear for his life, but they had bound him as with steel.

The brave, silent prisoner held his breath while the tempest whistled and frolicked around the lonely cabin in the woods.

Suddenly a sense of freedom came to Gordon. Had the cords upon his wrists been cut? He tried to lift his arm, and it yielded to his volition. Oh, blessed release!

The second arm was free, and he raised it to his face.

Silently the ghostly helper worked.

The cords which held his limbs dropped from their accustomed places, and his whole body felt the rush and surge of the blood pumped into the long-obstructed channels of abounding life.

“Follow me,” whispered a low, sweet voice.

Swinging upon his feet, stretching himself for a moment, that he might master his unused members, Gordon swiftly followed his mysterious saviour to the door between the rooms. Glancing for a moment upon the snoring, drunken crew lying carelessly in close quarters near the fire, the two shadowy forms passed quietly across the floor, and emerged into the welcome fury of the storm, where another comrade awaited them.

Hastening through the swaying, creaking forest, they stumbled against Sambo, in charge of Gordon's horse.

“Heah, Mista' Gordon, jump into de saddle,” and the gentleman was in his place on the instant. “And let my missus ride on de pillion; and you jess leave de lady at de fust fa'mhouse on de right. We'll walk home,” pointing to the unknown lad by his side.

What cared Gordon for the pelting rain? It refreshed every nerve, muscle, sinew, of the body.

What cared a free man for tumultuous winds? They jested with him, and sported like lads let loose from school.

“You are to make for Fairfield with all speed,” said the lady on the pillion.

Was music ever sweeter in man’s ears than the words of his mistress? They had not been face to face in the light, — his rescuer was closely shielded by an old military cloak which she chose to fling across her person; but could that voice deceive him?

“And must I leave you in the gloom of yonder farmhouse?”

“I am staying with a friend,” was the reply. “It was she that planned the rescue.”

“Thank God for brave, true women!” exclaimed Gordon, with fervor.

“Mr. Peyton will care for you when you reach the tavern. The storm has drenched you, and bondage leaves you worn and distraught. Hasten to shelter and the good offices of your friend!”

Gordon tried to turn in the saddle, that he might, perchance, look into the face of his deliverer, but fortune did not favor him.

The rain and the wind gathered fresh violence, driving mercilessly against the travelers, the horse splashed and stumbled through



THEY HALTED AT THE FARMHOUSE

the slush and snow, the black sky shut down threateningly upon them, yet two happy people sat close together upon the wet back of a restless, fiery steed, making an uncertain way through the blinding storm.

They halted at the farmhouse. Gordon leaped from the saddle, and the girl sprang into his arms. It was a great temptation, for the winds had tossed the military cloak one side, and her dim face was exposed.

She turned from him and faded into the shades of night and the tempest, but not until the vague light revealed Martha Randolph.

CHAPTER XXI

A RUDE EXCHANGE OF COURTESIES

THE hours dragged a halting way through the night, while Peyton watched and waited. At three o'clock in the morning a solitary horseman emerged from the raging storm, the stable-boy pushed open the great barn door for his coming, the rider slipped into the arms of his anxious friend.

Gordon was soaked to the skin, shivering with cold, and more dead than alive. The great fire in Peyton's room, needed restoratives, dry, warm clothes, and the tender services of his friend kindled anew the half-quenched flame of life.

"Why, man, look at your wrists and your ankles. What have your captors done to you?"

"They bound me fast to the rickety old high-posted bedstead that had been left in the shanty. These are the marks of my bonds," examining the red, raw circles.

"They did n't try to torture you?"

“Oh, no,” was Gordon’s reply. “They left me severely alone. I don’t know what they had decided to do with me in the end; but I imagine that my stay in the hut was to have reached its finale this very night. I heard talk about the flow of the tide and a going away.”

“You take it with your habitual calm and self-restraint,” exclaimed Peyton, gratitude, indignation, and a sense of humor struggling for mastery as he spoke.

“Well, what matters it, now that the thing is passed? Jackson is two or three thousand miles to the southwest, but he seems to have a long arm. He’s the ingenious contriver of the kidnapping.”

It was close upon day when Gordon fell asleep, Peyton still sitting before the merry fire, dropping off into feverish, frequent naps.

With the coming of the morning, the men bestirred themselves.

“My adventure must not be taken seriously by the townspeople,” remarked the escaped prisoner. “We will speak lightly of it, — a sort of practical joke. Some of these Yankees, you know, are passing fond of tricks.”

When Gordon appeared, many inquiries

were made, but he refused to tell the story, calling it, in his good-natured way, one of the incidents accompanying the heat of war and politics.

The very day of his return, a letter, bearing the Washington postmark, was read off for Peyton at the office, the neighbors exchanging views upon the frequency with which such letters came to the gentleman from Virginia.

“Now, this is unfortunate,” exclaimed Peyton. They had made their way to the Hardys’. “I must go to Hartford, when I ought to stay in town so that we could kill the fatted calf, and feast over the coming back of our friend.”

“Oh, can’t you wait?” cried Davie. “Do let us have a little party.”

The storm had ceased, the sky was clear, and Martha, home from her night with the Stratford friend, beamed with the radiancy of her new joy.

“I’m sorry to appear obstinate,” — smiling upon the boy, — “but it’s not a matter of choice. I *must* go. I’ll get to New Haven this evening, and push ahead early to-morrow morning.”

It was all mysterious, — Gordon’s stay in

Hartford during the first days of the convention, and his strange disappearance; Martha's sudden visit to Stratford, and the escape of the gentleman; Mary's troubled, nervous manner, Peyton's unexpected start for the northern city, — the general air of evasion, restlessness and uncertainty.

Peyton set forth half an hour before sunset.

There was so much ill blood at this period in New England that the odium and malice connected with strife in politics did not abate, and men resorted to many strange devices in order to carry their point.

The meeting of the Hartford Convention, its close sessions and spirit of reserve, the railing accusations brought against it by the administration's stanch supporters, the dark outlook for peace, and the suspected treachery of men high in state counsels, — these things intensified bitter personal feelings, and drove hot-headed partisans into many rash acts.

Peyton was thinking of these things and his letter from Washington, as he made his way toward New Haven.

Having crossed the Ousatonic, he had taken a slow gait, and given himself over to thinking out his plans. He must remain in Hartford until the convention ended; then he

was to hasten on to Washington with his report, meet certain men connected with the government, and, after a few days, return to Connecticut.

Absorbed in his affairs, the traveler suddenly awakened to the fact that he was escorted by half a dozen well-mounted horsemen, and that they were all pointed for the shore. Giving his bridle a strong pull, Peyton attempted to turn about and get back upon the turnpike, from which he had been so mysteriously diverted.

“ You are riding with us, my friend,” said the gentleman nearest to him, catching hold of his hand, and pressing against the animal which bore him. “ We have started you on a pleasant excursion ; no violence is intended. We long for your society ; you will come with us ! ”

The tone was one of authority, and something in the speaker’s manner made Peyton feel that rough measures impended as a last resort, if resistance followed.

“ Well,” observed the Virginia cavalier, with as good a grace as he was able to command, “ I’ll make a virtue of necessity, and go with you.”

“ That’s a wise decision,” remarked the

leader. "We know you, Mr. Peyton; we like our Southern cousins. Don't think you're fallen among cut-throats. We'll treat you like a gentleman, if you quietly bear us company."

What was the use of fighting, under the circumstances? The careless visionary had been surrounded by armed men, six to one; it was night, the road unknown and lonely, help far away, and winter brooded over the landscape.

The men watched Peyton with lynx eyes. A mouse shut into close quarters with hungry feline enemies stood an equal chance of escape.

They reached the cove, hastily dismounted, sprang into a rowboat, and pushed for a schooner, which faintly outlined itself against the western sky.

"We have been told that you are fond of sailing," said the spokesman of the party jocosely. "It is not the best time for pleasuring on the sound, but this air is better for you than that of Hartford."

The meaning of it flashed through Peyton's mind. The Democrats had kidnapped Gordon. Some Federal bucks—the men were young, stalwart, lively—had set upon him in retaliation. The absurdity of the

thing first struck him. What good did either party think might come through such a trick? He had done all in his power to ferret out the mystery of Gordon's capture. His friend would do the same for him.

But a second thought flitted through his mind. Doubtless the captors of Gordon believed him an English informer, sent into the Eastern States to watch the trend of events. This was Jackson's story, which he had never ceased to repeat,—an accusation that Gordon did not take the pains to deny. The history of John Henry was familiar. While Gordon was a different kind of man, yet the credulous were ready to swallow whatever the masters put down their throats.

It also occurred to Peyton that there were men in Connecticut who did not look with favor upon himself. More than one Federalist had called him mean names, twitting him with telling tales upon his New England friends, turning the sweet courtesies of social life into base and treacherous uses. Was not the young gentleman a neighbor of Madison's, and did not the President now and again take the pains to write him a letter?

There was a fair breeze, so that the schooner made good time, albeit Peyton was shut into

the little cabin, where he spent a night and a day.

The evening after this sail down the sound, a quartette of men rowed the blindfolded prisoner ashore, where a sleigh and horses carried the party inland a score of miles.

When the bandage was taken from Peyton's eyes, his escort had disappeared, and three brothers held him in their charge.

These men were thrifty farmers, living in bachelor's hall, served by two faithful slaves of the old régime.

In the morning Peyton noted the close watch put upon him by his jailers, — that was to be expected, — but the look of fear or pity that lurked in their eyes puzzled him. What did it mean?

“I don't suppose you'll give me any satisfaction if I ask you why I am banished to this place,” remarked Peyton, addressing the elder of the brothers.

“Did you rest well?” was the answer. “We've just set up our new Franklin stove in the room where you slept. Folks ain't used to them things everywhere, Mr. Beebe.”

“Mr. Beebe!” exclaimed Peyton, with a look of annoyance; “my name is n't Beebe, it's Peyton.”

The man smiled indulgently, and winked at Prime, the whites of whose eyes grew large until the small black specks of the eyeballs disappeared.

“Had enough to eat this morning, Mr. Beebe?”

“I tell you my name is n't Beebe. It's Peyton. Half a dozen of your Eastern gentlemen seized me night before last while on my way to Hartford. I supposed a man had a reasonable assurance of safety in this so-called Land of Steady Habits.”

“Anything we can do to make you comfortable, Mr. Beebe, we're in duty bound to do.”

Peyton knit his brow, for he was angry; then he laughed in a joyless, unnatural way, and began to pace up and down the room.

They were all kind and attentive, everything necessary for good living was supplied in abundance, and little done to cross him, with the exception that he was faithfully guarded, and they all insisted in calling him Mr. Beebe.

One evening he stole into the kitchen and tried to talk privately with old Prime.

“Ever been South?”

“My old Missus bringed us all de way from Virginny.”

The fellow shivered as he spoke, and eyed Peyton as some poor, helpless brute might eye a panther on the point of springing upon him.

“You need n’t be afraid. I won’t harm you,” said the stranger good naturedly. “Virginia’s my home. That’s where I was born and bred.”

Prime gazed curiously upon the speaker, fear giving way to interest in the words of this quiet-spoken, handsome, commanding gentleman.

“Yo’ don’t talk like a Yankee,” whispered the man of color.

“Why, the devil, of course I don’t. How can I? I never saw Yankee land until I went to the Litchfield law school. Who told you to call me Beebe?”

It suddenly dawned upon Peyton that these men in bachelor’s hall believed him to be crazy.

Several days passed in which he tried to see Prime alone, but the opportunity evaded him. The new year opened fresh, clean pages of life’s book, and still Peyton lingered in absurd, vexatious confinement.

At length there came a chance for talk with the old slave, which Peyton improved in asking questions about the lay of the land,

the distance from New York, the best roads of the section, the horses kept by his jailers, the peculiar habits of the brothers, and other important matters.

Prime had evidently reached the conclusion that there was something crooked about the seclusion of Mr. Beebe, as the farmer brothers called him ; but the old slave was not the man to turn against his masters. He would do all in his power to make the strange gentleman easy and contented, cooking as only Prime could practice the wondrous art, waiting upon him with unwearied faithfulness.

Peyton discovered that the slave was incorruptible ; no hope of release came from that quarter.

But a plan had already been formed in the supposed lunatic's mind.

It was the evening after his talk with Prime that Peyton massed all his conversational powers, and entertained his jailers hour after hour with such a flow of narrative, anecdote, reminiscence, that they were enchanted and delighted. Long, long past their time of usual rest, he held them by the charms of speech. It was on toward the morning that they yielded to exhaustion, two of them stumbling reluctantly to bed,

while the third took the usual place of watch in Peyton's chamber.

But the fire in the Franklin stove was hot and prostrating. The watcher's eyes grew dreamy. Peyton appeared wrapped in slumber. The watcher's head fell heavily against the high back of the chair in which he reclined. The man slept soundly, his breast heaving with a regularity that suggested hours of sweet repose.

Peyton was quick in action under the pressure of circumstances. Springing into his clothes, he stole quietly through the house, and hastened to the barn, with which he had become familiar, where he soon put saddle and bridle upon the best horse of the stable, and was off toward the east in order to give his pursuers a false scent when they started on the chase.

At the end of a mile he turned abruptly about and chose another road which Prime had told him led to the main turnpike running into New York.

Peyton was in high feather. The farmhouse had afforded the fat of the land; refreshing sleep, nourishing fare, and solitude adding daily vigor to his frame. No money rattled in his wallet, and the way before

him was unknown, but Peyton had hunted through the forests and mountains of old Virginia to good purpose. Trust him for picking a straight road.

The horse cantered over familiar places with easy gait. By and by the speed was increased. As the dawn drew on apace, Peyton urged him to faster speed. It was not good traveling, snow, ice, frozen earth, and rough stones interfering with rapid progress; still the happy traveler made fair haste.

When the sun crept out from behind the clouds that banked the eastern sky, the dull landscape lighted up for an hour, and then heavy shadows settled down upon nature.

"It looks like snow," remarked Peyton to himself. "But I am well on toward Brooklyn."

He never stopped for food or drink. He must get the East River between himself and his rustic jailers; then all danger was passed, for it seemed like searching for a needle in a haystack, the trying to find a man in the great city on Manhattan Island.

It began to snow, and the blinding flakes annoyed him.

"Brooklyn can't be far distant."

He was galloping over a much traveled

road, and there were many signs of a thickly settled country.

“Hey, man, don’t run a fellow down,” shouted a voice in the thick of the storm.

Peyton turned aside to avoid the huge cart lumbering along before him.

“How far is it to the ferry?”

“A good three mile,” was the reply, as Peyton plunged ahead into the thickening snow.

“Now, what under heavens shall I do with this fine animal?”

He did not tarry to give himself an answer, for the sound of swift approaching riders warned him that danger might be near. Urging the horse to the top of his speed, Peyton dashed recklessly into the obscure beyond. The muffled sounds of pursuing feet struck his ears over and over again.

On pressed his steed in the true spirit of chase, barely slipping past dimly seen perils, knocking against a wagon, a foot traveler, or some other vague obstruction.

At last the dim lines of houses showed themselves, and Peyton abruptly darted into a side street, making the wearied horse step gently in the way. A faint noise of human voices and horses’ footfalls mingled in the

air, then the silence of the soft, down-coming snow shut in around him.

Peyton made a slow way to the ferry, walked on to the boat, and watched it shove off for the hither shore.

At this opportune moment the owners of the borrowed steed hove in sight.

“I’ll send your horse back,” shouted Peyton merrily. “I’m obliged for the use of him. He’s a fine animal.”

The answer was lost in the flurry of snow.

On reaching the New York side, Peyton started for the City Hotel, but while walking blindly up Broadway, he came into sharp collision with a little gentleman whose courteous apologies and familiar features revealed no less a person than Colonel Burr.

“Now, this is curious,” exclaimed Peyton. “I’m looking for a man to loan me money enough to go to Fairfield.”

The name of the beloved town acted like a charm.

“Come to my office, and the help shall be granted. Meanwhile you may tell me what you like, and we’ll spend an hour in friendly chat.”

The old-time fascination of manner lingered; there was the same grace and geniality.

Peyton had seen the man in Richmond when on trial. As a child he recalled many a kind word spoken to him by the gentleman — Burr was fond of children — on the streets of Washington.

“The stage-coach runs on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays,” observed the colonel.

“Yes, I’m well posted on the Connecticut coaches,” said Peyton laughingly. “I’ve spent a good portion of three years in the Land of Steady Habits.”

“I see that you hail from the South.”

“I’m a Virginian,” was the proud answer.

“With presidential aspirations?” Burr smiled sarcastically. It was known that he did not approve the policy which choose all the presidents from one State.

They entered the house which Burr had fitted up for office and home. The story of Peyton’s ride was soon told, particulars in respect to his capture and confinement being withheld.

“Why, man, you must be famished!” exclaimed the colonel.

A hearty dinner, dry clothes, stimulating potations, and the witty, brilliant talk of the host put Peyton in a merry humor. What

stories of Fairfield people were reeled off to the delight of this listener so strangely picked up in the storm! What bright, jolly reminiscences crowded upon the telling! The colonel was inimitable as a raconteur. Every odd person, absurd frolic, wild adventure, curious event, known thirty years before was dressed in fantastic colors, and made to do homage on the stage of memory for the entertainment of these two men. Family ghost stories, the weird traditions of early witches, incidents that compromised well-known individuals, — a wonderful assortment of fact and fancy woven with the skill peculiar to Aaron Burr, — these were the diverting subjects of that never-to-be-forgotten afternoon and evening.

“ You know I’m related to half the families in Fairfield, so I can speak with freedom and knowledge. And I never spare a story for relation’s sake.”

“ And I suppose your treasury contains the like rich material gleaned in Litchfield ? ”

“ Yes, I had my fair measure of sport and happiness in the hill-top village.” And the colonel launched into fresh recitals.

Peyton left New York early the next morning.

CHAPTER XXII

THE PEACE CONVENTION AND THE STRIFE OF SOULS

GORDON made a second visit to Hartford during the sessions of the convention, choosing the stage-coach as a safer means of travel.

Going to Ripley's tavern, he inquired for Peyton, and was told that the gentleman had not been seen in the place. Hartford boasted a population of four thousand people, so it did not require many hours to satisfy Gordon that his friend had not reached the little city.

While searching the taverns and the private boarding-houses for some traces of the man, a mysterious scrawl was put into his hands, which read to the effect that Peyton had turned one side by the way. What did it mean? The remembrance of his own recent experience suggested that something of the kind might have befallen Peyton; but sober second thought insisted upon the folly of it.

The evening that Mayor Goodrich entertained the members of the convention, Gordon was favored with a view of the company. They were a venerable body of men, honor and wisdom, dignity and culture, manifest in their speech and bearing.

They all wore full-skirted coats, black silk waistcoats, black cloth breeches, black silk stockings, and black shoes. Their white heads, the hair falling upon their shoulders, or tied into a queue with black ribbon, their intellectual, noble faces, lighted up with the great purposes which moved them to their public service, their courtly manners, and lofty mien stamped them as the worthy representatives of New England.

What did it signify to these men that Jemmy Lamb, the town crier, with his little company of United States troops walked around the State House to the tune of the "Rogue's March," or that somebody displayed the flag of the Union at half mast the first morning of the convention, to express, as they said, sorrow for the depravity of these men plotting the destruction of American liberty? And were these chosen agents of the commonwealths to be diverted from duty because, forsooth, a few raw recruits of the

army ran up the American flag at headquarters, putting the British flag beneath it at half mast, or tramped through the streets with reversed arms and muffled drums? Were men like the mayor of Hartford or the senator from Connecticut and their compeers faint hearts to mind a funeral chime tolled on the bell of the Baptist meeting-house for their annoyance?

“Mr. Cabot reminds me of Washington,” remarked young Samuel Goodrich to Gordon. “What a stately carriage! How commanding in his person!”

“He’s a great authority on political economy, I am told.”

“Yes; and look at Mr. Prescott. I like his face. Beyond him is another Massachusetts man, Mr. Longfellow, a fine scholar and jurist. Do you think him handsome?”

So the young men observed different members of the company, Goodrich taking pains to instruct his hearer upon the shining virtues of the various delegates.

“You have not told me how you enjoyed actual service in the militia,” said Gordon.

“Oh, we made a fine appearance when we left town and hurried to New London. Our new cocked hats, long-tailed blue coats with

red facings, white pantaloons, and shining cutlasses excited the envy of all the country lads; but the service became dull and monotonous. I was glad when the company had orders to go home."

"Think of calling the men gathered under your uncle's roof 'hellish conspirators'!" pointing to the delegates engaged in social amenities.

Goodrich smiled derisively as he answered the remark made by his friend:—

"I read the other day that they were so wicked as to aim a dagger at the vitals of their already bleeding country."

"Well, the convention has excited great hopes and great fears."

"Yes, it's an object of love to some people, and hatred to others." Goodrich was silent a moment. "Have you read 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' yet?"

"Yes," was Gordon's reply, "and it's aglow with the fire of youth and passion."

"Our Connecticut scholars dreamed that the Muses had come to tarry with us a few years ago, when the Hartford wits flourished, but it was all a dream. The atmosphere of polite letters is not made to order. I'm thinking of going to Europe, if this war

ever ends, and public affairs take the right drift.”

Gordon and Goodrich had enjoyed a pleasant acquaintance for several years, having tastes and friends in common.

“A man would think, on reading some of the Democratic papers these days, that Hartford was like a seething caldron the time that these gentlemen have been quietly discussing affairs of state.”

“I looked for Peyton in town,” answered Gordon irrelevantly. “He started for Hartford days ago. It’s not like him to leave us in the dark concerning his plans. He’s been talking about going to Washington and Virginia. I can’t make out why he lingers here in the North when he is such an ardent patriot, and so often expresses the wish to enlist as a soldier.”

Goodrich hesitated before making a reply.

“There’s been some rough horse-play between the young Federalists and Democrats of our State, the past months. But then, Peyton’s popular with us, and I can’t believe anybody would harm him.”

A few days later, the Hartford Convention adjourned *sine die*, and the delegates hastened to their homes. Gordon rode with

Mr. Sherman to Fairfield. The first man to greet them as the stage-coach halted before the tavern was Marshall Peyton.

“Come, give an account of yourself,” said Gordon, delighted to set eyes upon his friend.

“I changed my plans,” answered the gentleman, shifting his position and gazing toward the sea. “I’ve been to New York.”

There was something in the tone of his reply which perplexed the questioner; but Gordon was not the man to insist upon explanations.

They were sitting with little Davie and the sisters in uncle David’s study, a few hours later.

“And you spent the night with Colonel Burr?” The animated face of Mary Randolph was beaming upon Peyton.

“Yes, and he entertained me charmingly with stories of you Fairfield folk, and reminiscences of Litchfield. The truth is, I never spent a merrier night than the one when I was his guest.”

“But you do not tell us how the other days were passed.”

Martha’s remark implied an interrogation.

“No,” said Peyton, with provoking drollery, “that’s my secret.”

“ Oh, tell it to me, please,” cried the child. “ Remember what a good fortune I gave you ! ”

But the mystery of his absence did not clear.

The Hartford Convention was the chief theme of conversation on every side. The peace party became hopeful that the delegates appointed to carry its resolutions to Washington would make a strong and favorable impression upon the government; but the war party continued their most rancorous assaults upon the men connected with the movement.

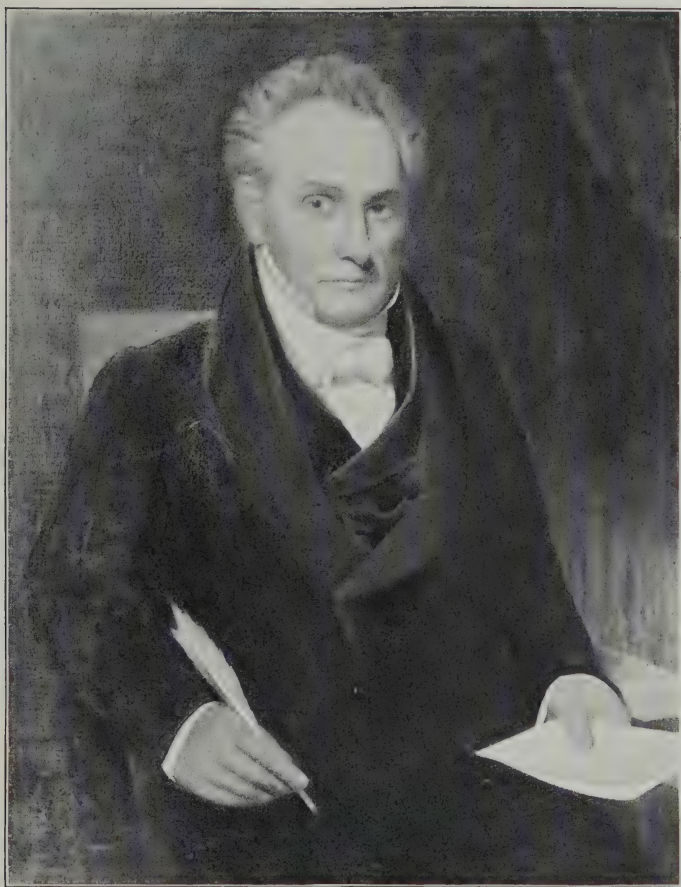
Fort Union, at Black Rock, was garrisoned by the little company of local militia, the men having recently been supplied with new muskets, bayonets, cartridge boxes and belts, camp kettles, tin pans, rope, frying-pans, tin cups, pickaxes, and pails; Mr. Abraham Benson acting as assistant commissary, and furnishing the good prime beef and pork, and other food. This renewed activity on the part of the town militia showed that the prospects for peace were not the best, although the national commissioners had been treating with British statesmen at Ghent for months.

One day Peyton made bold to question Mr. Sherman, one of the conspicuous members of the Hartford Convention, in respect to its character and purpose. The gentleman's statements were frank and lucid.

“As soon as the convention was organized,” said the honorable member, “Mr. Otis, a delegate from Massachusetts, proposed, after some prefatory remarks, that we should recommend to our several legislatures to present a petition to the Congress of the United States, praying that they would consent that the New England States, or so many of them as should agree together for that purpose, might unite in defending themselves against the public enemy; that so much of the national revenues as should be collected in these States should be appropriated to the expense of that defense; that the amount so appropriated should be credited to the United States; and that the United States should agree to pay whatever should be expended beyond that amount.”

Peyton listened with the closest attention.

“This was approved by the convention. The same views had been stated here before the meeting of the delegates. By the Constitution of the United States, no such com-



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compact for mutual defense could be formed without the consent of Congress."

"Yes, I remember it," said Peyton.

"By thus augmenting our immediate resources, and obtaining the national guaranty that the expenses of the war, to be increased by the States thus uniting, should ultimately be paid out of the national treasury, it was supposed that our credit as well as our present pecuniary resources would be enhanced."

"I follow the line of thought."

"A debate was also had in the convention as to certain amendments to the Constitution of the United States to be proposed for adoption by the state legislatures."

Peyton bent forward his head in his anxiety to catch the very inflections of the speaker.

"One was that Congress should not have power to declare war without the concurrence of two thirds of both Houses. A committee, of which I was a member, was appointed to draw up the report to present to their respective legislatures. The proposal of Mr. Otis was adopted with little variation. It was recommended to the legislatures represented in the convention to adopt measures to protect the citizens from such conscriptions or

impressments as were not authorized by the Constitution of the United States.”

“May I ask a question that will possibly seem brutal in its candor; one that has been suggested by the drift of public opinion in many parts of our country?”

“Certainly,” replied Mr. Sherman, with his characteristic sincerity and kindness.

“Was the object of the convention to embarrass or paralyze the government of the United States in the prosecution of the war with Great Britain?”

“No!” was the earnest, indignant answer; and the majesty, the truthfulness of the man smote rebukingly upon the ears of the questioner. “Its principal object was a more effectual coöperation in the war as to the defense of the New England States.” Mr. Sherman waxed eloquent in his brief, honest statement of the case. “There is not the slightest foundation for impugning the motives of these men, or stamping the proceedings of the convention as treasonable.” It was impossible to doubt the word of this noble apologist or advocate. “The delegates never contemplated an act inconsistent with their obligations to the United States.”

Far into the night, Peyton’s lively quill

sped across and across the paper as he pieced together his story of the Hartford Convention ; ending the account with a fervent wish for honorable peace, and a generous expression of faith in the integrity of the men who were members of it.

On the following day, the bulky letter was dispatched to Washington.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PURITANS AT THEIR FIRST BALL

THE sloop *Favorite* entered the harbor of New York Saturday night, February the eleventh, and Henry Carroll, one of the secretaries of the commission, carried news of the treaty of peace to the City Hotel. Half an hour later, bells were ringing in the church spires, and lights flaring merrily in the windows of nearly every house, the streets resounding with the cry, "A peace! A peace!"

On Sunday morning, expresses rode in all directions carrying the glad tidings.

Monday, Mr. Samuel Goodrich took coach for New Haven, and while the mail was being changed at Fairfield, late in the afternoon, he espied Gordon and Peyton at the tavern.

"A great day, my friends!" shouted the young Federalist. "New York went wild on yester Sabbath. All the country is aroused. I've never seen anything like it. Our ride has been a perpetual ovation, hundreds upon hundreds flocking to the taverns, and asking

all news, saying it's too good to be true, — gone daft in their frenzy of jubilation."

"Yes, yes, we've caught the spirit!" exclaimed Peyton hilariously. "The town, you see, is awake and lively."

The crowd surged about the stage, and assailed every passenger with questions.

"How about the gentlemen sent to Washington by the convention?" whispered Gordon.

"They'll be swallowed up in the maelstrom of rejoicing, I suppose," was the reply. "But the essential thing is peace, and it has come."

"Well," observed Peyton thoughtfully, edging away from the riotous throng of men and boys surrounding the coach, and taking Gordon and Goodrich with him, "can you tell us anything about the terms?"

"Not a word," was the reply. "I doubt if anybody has stopped to think or ask. The joy of the people is a sight to see; I suppose it's enough that a treaty of peace has been signed, for it means a fresh start to everything in the land, — business, commerce, industry, prosperity, — all that's dear to the American heart."

It was truly, as Mr. Goodrich said, a great day. The government stock rose ten per

cent. in New York and Philadelphia. As the news spread through the land, schools were dismissed, legislatures adjourned, business suspended; guns multiplied their salutes, while men, women, and children made the sky ring with acclamations.

The treaty was approved in a few days, being declared the law of the land on February the eighteenth.

The citizens of Fairfield chose the twenty-fifth of the month as the day for their celebration.

The years of bitter feud and cruel assault had passed. Old friends, who could not invent harsh enough terms with which to pelt each other, now met in amity and goodwill. Families broken into hateful factions were reunited. Federalist and Republican clasped hands as brothers. Political differences seemed all forgotten, the growing lion of Democracy lying down with the still robust lamb of Federalism.

Peace gave a new turn to the private affairs of Gordon and Peyton, the one hurrying to New York and Philadelphia the second day after Goodrich's ride through town, the other setting to himself the task of winding up his business in Connecticut.

Gordon visited New Bedford, New London, Stonington, and New Haven before a return to Fairfield. Peyton packed his books, sporting outfit, and wearing gear, wrote numerous letters, and paid all bills; then spent a good measure of his spare time with his friends the Hardys.

While everybody rejoiced in peace, little Davie and his sisters were oppressed by a stealthy fear. The day of Peyton's going drew rapidly near, while it became evident that Gordon was now to be looked upon simply as a bird of passage, flitting hither and thither in connection with his commercial interests, which must now take the large portion of his time.

They were present at the peace celebration, and made their last day in town one long to be remembered.

Early in the morning of the twenty-fifth, the soldiers at Fort Union fired a Federal salute, answered by Colonel Gershom Burr's artillery, which had been placed on the village Green. This discharge of guns was the signal for a gathering of the people.

"Did you ever see such a crowd in the old town?" said Mary, as she observed the streams of humanity converging on the parade ground.

It was still winter, people being forced to stand the rigors of typical New England weather; but gratitude and hope, stirring within the heart, broke through all barriers.

“The procession starts from Fort Union at ten o’clock,” said Martha. “The tavern will be so packed with sightseers that we shall lose our chance unless we hasten.”

The young folks were to gaze upon the gay scene from a window reserved for them.

“There they come!” shouted Davie, after their party had, with sore difficulty, made a way to their standing-place. “Look at the men; you can’t see the end of the procession.” The child craned his neck in order to take a long view of the show.

“Our citizens make a fine appearance, don’t they?” Mary referred to the shining faces quite as much as to the Sunday clothes.

“Hurrah for the soldiers!” exclaimed Davie, “they’re next in line. See how proudly they hold their muskets, and how they tramp, tramp, with a firm step; and they’ve all put on their new cocked hats.”

With stately tread the troops passed on.

“And what is this?”

The snow was falling, so that the parade was suddenly dimmed.

“It’s a boat,” answered Mary; “they’ve set it on runners. How beautifully they’ve trimmed it. There’s the red, white, and blue, there’s the Union Jack, there’s the flag of Spain, and France, and Italy, and Portugal, — why, they must have gathered all the colors of the nations; and there are one, two, three, four,” counting aloud, “thirty of our youth drawing the handsome emblem.”

“And look,” cried Davie, pointing in the opposite direction, “there comes another pretty craft, and there are as many lads drawing it.”

The two brightly adorned boats met in the street before them, and right merry were their salutations.

“Ship ahoy!”

“Who are you?”

“Whither bound?”

“How many days out?”

Back and forth the words were flung with jest and repartee, the throngs of onlookers cheering their best and bravest.

The strains of martial music sounded high above the din of human voices; there was ringing of bells and firing of guns; huzzas reverberated through the town, militiamen and citizens, women and children, men of all

classes, political faiths, and conditions filling the streets. It was a pageant which boldly faced a nipping air and the whirling snow-flakes.

“ Shall we crowd into the meeting-house, and hear Mr. Humphrey’s address ? ” Gordon asked the question.

“ No, for Martha and I must go to the court house, and help set the feast,” replied Mary.

It was an eloquent speech which the young minister delivered, and his hearers sat uncomplainingly through the cold hour, but many sighs of relief were heaved when the service of thanksgiving ended ; people were free to pass up and down the crowded streets, or linger in jolly companies on the Green and in the taverns.

The procession re-formed after leaving the meeting-house, marching about the town, that everybody might have a fair view of the rare show, coming to a final halt in front of the great ox that was roasting for their entertainment in the open air on the west side of the court house.

How the huge creature steamed and sizzled as the fires leaped upon him, and the winds seasoned the cooking with falling snow !

What jestful, hungry throngs stood watching the curious process, as the master of this barbecue thrust his great knife and fork into one side of the creature that he might test the quality of the feast!

The second story of the court house was the scene of wildest merry-making. Gordon and Peyton, waiting upon the young ladies and lending a helpful hand, had made their way into the good graces of the entire company. No need of formal introductions on such a day, when hearts were too full for mere conventionality.

“I never suspected that you New Englanders had so much geniality in your constitutions,” remarked Peyton to Miss Mary as they set the tables in order for the five hundred privileged guests. “Why, it’s as free among you to-day as in old Virginia. Such hospitality gives me a real home feeling.”

“Oh, we Northern folks have hearts if you are shrewd enough to find the way into them. Now, Mr. Gordon, you shall sit with the dignitaries at this table,” pointing to the place set apart for the ministers, the lawyers, the militia officers, the town, state, and national makers or executors of the laws, “and Mr. Peyton shall keep you company. Martha

and I must wait on the table. We'll see that you are well supplied with food."

It was a prodigal feast, and while the gentry and the notables enjoyed the generous bounty spread for them within the court house, the masses shared the roast ox and the liberal viands passed to them out in the open, beneath the curtain of the snow-bestrewn air.

All day long there was vast hilarity, the happy maidens of the town serving their gay swains, not only with the dainties which their skill had evolved from generous ovens, but with kind or teasing speeches, willful or enticing glances, — the infinite, trivial play of courtship.

At sunset there was another Federal salute.

When darkness shrouded the noisy, crowded village, thousands upon thousands of candles cast their light into the streets. Every house, shop, store, and public edifice was brilliantly illumined, each window-pane graced with a tallow dip or a sperm light, — the white, crisp snow enhancing the beauty and brightness of the scene.

"Why, it's like fairyland!" cried Davie, looking wistfully into the night, longing to be one of the boys running madly adown the street in the freedom of this wonderful evening frolic.

On the Green, the men had planted a tall, slender tree, nailing long cross-pieces upon it, from the ground to the top. On the end of each transverse stick a tar barrel was fastened, the whole making a ludicrous parody of nature. When these tar-besmeared objects were set on fire, the light flared into the heavens like some awful conflagration. Shouts upon shouts of admiration filled the air; the restless, jubilant multitude surged over the Green as the tides came sometimes rolling in across the low-lying salt meadows along the shore.

The illumination ended at nine o'clock, and sober, methodical citizens wended their weary way home.

But the chief event of the celebration was to follow. A grand ball had been arranged in the hotel, and many a Puritan youth and maiden was to taste for the first time this alluring and forbidden kind of gayety.

“I said that I should go to a ball when I had the chance,” explained Mary mischievously. “We shall never celebrate another peace, I warrant you, and the gentlemen say there is no harm in it. Then mother is won over, and Mr. Gordon has her permission to escort us.”

This was the way that the blithe, audacious sister persuaded Martha.

The ball-room was adorned with bunting, worked into gay symbols of state, a few portraits of Revolutionary heroes, and multitudes of flags, so that bare walls shone resplendent with all the colors of the rainbow.

The hundreds of candles shedding their lustre upon the scene, and the great fire-places heaped high with sea driftwood, which threw brilliant, beautiful lights into the room, and the shifting, mirthful throngs of people, so pressing upon each other that dancing was impossible, strangely fascinated the Puritan sisters.

All gentle whisperings of conscience were lost in girlish delight over the glamour of this scene. The fashion, splendor, elegance, of the costumes worn by the ladies passed their wildest dreams, for people had delved down into old chests and brought forth the riches of generations, decking themselves in priceless silks from China or velvets from the looms of France, adding exquisite laces, graceful plumes, gold chains and breastpins, sparkling diamonds, quaint jewels, — all the treasured family keepsakes used for personal adornment through ages.

“Why, child, how beautiful you are!” exclaimed Gordon, with sudden enthusiasm, as he gazed upon Martha Randolph standing beneath the dazzling chandelier in the centre of the room.

She had chosen a pale blue silk for her dress-stuff, brought long years ago to her mother by Captain Jennings, on his return from the Celestial Empire. It was a short-waisted, full-skirted gown, cut low in the neck, but her fair shoulders were covered with fold upon fold of rare old lace, extending to her very throat. Long gloves met the flowing sleeves above the elbows. A Grecian knot gathered her amplitude of golden hair, a glittering bauble of Moorish workmanship being fastened to one side of it. Her dainty white slippers were trimmed with blue rosettes, into which were thrust jeweled pins, heirlooms of the Randolph family.

Gordon was pointing out to Miss Martha the various devices suggested by his own brain or wrought with his deft fingers.

“You are a very good American,” observed the girl, smiling with cordial praise as one or another emblem was admired.

“You have not said one word to me since we entered the ball-room,” exclaimed Mary,

with assumed petulance and vexation, as she stood by Gordon's side.

“How could I,” was the answer, “when Peyton was lavishing his wonderful powers of conversation upon you?”

The two gentlemen were dressed in the height of fashion, — blue cloth coats, knee breeches to match, with bright silver buckles, white silk stockings, and black pumps, Gordon wearing a scarlet brocaded waistcoat, and Peyton a yellow one; both men having beruffled bosoms and waist-bands and high white throat kerchiefs, their hair tied with black ribbons and showily powdered.

Peyton followed every look and motion of the young woman leaning upon his arm, and there were many observers who turned to gaze upon the sweet vision.

Mary had chosen a soft, creamy silk for her dress. It was made in the Empire style, like one seen by a friend at the French minister's, in Washington. There was a great deal of fine, filmy lace used in the trimming of it, the delicate webs winding thickly about her shoulders, neck, and throat, half concealing a necklace of pearls falling upon her breast. Her arms were bare from the elbows down, as shapely and beautiful as one ever saw.

Her slender feet were encased in white slippers, the pink silk of her stockings observable as she pushed a little forward on the floor. The Grecian knot of dark hair was adorned with three tips of white plumes, held in their place by a small golden dagger with sparkling gems in the hilt.

How the beauty and splendor of these old family jewels delighted the soul of the wearer! Her eyes sparkled with a brighter glory, her face shone with a lovelier radiance, than any which streamed from golden ornament or lustrous bauble.

“I promised to teach you how to dance a minuet, but who can trip the light fantastic toe in such a crowd as this?”

Gordon addressed Martha, but his eyes were fixed upon her sister.

“Are you speaking to me?” inquired Peyton laughingly. “I see that you look my way.”

It was to Miss Mary that Gordon’s eyes did homage.

An hour later these two young people watched the lingering play of light as delicate flames shot forth from the fast-dying fire on the Green. The window where they tarried looked down upon the fantastic pic-

ture. Peyton and Miss Martha had drifted to the farther end of the ball-room.

It was not what Gordon said so much as the tone in which he spoke that startled Mary. A subtle intuition warned her. Another moment, and he might utter words that would bring infinite pain. The struggle was swift, decisive.

“Mr. Gordon, you must not forget your promise to my sister.” The spell was broken. “She will not permit Mr. Peyton to instruct her in the arts of Terpsichore. Do you not see that she awaits your coming?”

They pressed through the company. Gordon, taking his dismissal as quietly as it had been given, paid court to Martha.

While Gordon taught Martha the minuet, Peyton led her sister back to the window where she had stood earlier in the evening gazing out upon the cold, brilliant winter scene.

“The happiest days of my life have been spent in New England,” said the gentleman, with a fine ardor of tone and manner, far more significant than language. “I came to this Land of Steady Habits with strange prejudices. But I have learned to esteem these reserved, opinionated, energetic citizens

of the Republic. My stay in the North has taught me many lessons. I believe that I understand the New England character as few of my Southern brethren do."

"But you'll never make a New Englander," interrupted Mary, with charming grace, "your speech bewrayeth you."

"I'm not thinking of such a metamorphosis." Peyton laughed. "I'm thinking how we may transplant a New Englander into the South, and watch the change which will be wrought by our freer ways, our delicious climate, our flowers and birds, and sunsets, and associations."

"We are a restless, migratory folk, still we love our dear New England."

"And I love" — with sudden fire of passion like the flash of lightning from a cloud lying close by the horizon.

The sentence was unfinished, a rude interruption on the part of merry-makers sweeping the young people back into the current of life.

CHAPTER XXIV

“ HERE ’S TO NEW ENGLAND ”

AFTER the ball, Gordon invited Peyton to sit with him before the glowing fire in the privacy of his room. The steaming punch, the wreaths of fragrant smoke, the song of blazing wood, invited confidences.

“ I suppose the curtain now drops upon the last scene of our stay in this old town.”

Peyton was sad. He had not recovered from the shock given him in the ball-room.

“ Don’t take it to heart, my friend. We are bound to meet in coming years. Our ways will cross a thousand times, and this Connecticut that we have learned to love will be a meeting-place on many an occasion.”

There were long pauses in their talk; the gentlemen seemed lost in reverie.

“ I shall come back here in a few weeks, Gordon. I have a presentiment that Jackson will now appear in town. The glorious victory at New Orleans — a fight, by the way, which has redeemed all the blunders of our

men — will render him absolutely unendurable. What a pity that the fellow could n't have been shot, so that his sun would have set in a cloud of glory! As it is, he'll return to New York, go on with his law, pester our friends the Hardys, play the very deuce in society, and come to some bad end."

"A man ought n't to be so blue and down-hearted after such a day and night of hilarity, Peyton."

The interview of the evening had turned the mind of Peyton toward Jackson. Puff after puff of smoke diffused itself through the room, while the gentlemen observed the antics of the fire on the hearth.

"Gordon, I came to New England with the feeling that this freezing climate was actually an exponent of the people who live in it. My prejudices were absurd, and they've scattered to the four winds of heaven. I used to think that 'Yankee' was a name for everything mean and sharp in trade, offensive and inhospitable in manners, conceited and overbearing and hateful in spirit. Why, I have seen as much hospitality among these folks as among my own kith and kin. To be sure, their manners are peculiar, but they're really a large-hearted people, — kind and sympa-

thetic as you'll find in all the world. Of course, they're what is called 'sot in their opinions,' but so are we Southerners. I've made up my mind that a New Englander is, perhaps, as good as a Virginian. There was a time when I believed that they were tediously religious, going to church, or meeting as they say, every day in the week and twice on Sunday, and never kissing as we do in the South; I've been told there's a 'Blue Law' about it. But heavens, what nonsense we get into our heads! Did you ever see a jollier company than celebrated here to-day? And I caught half a dozen bucks hugging and kissing the pretty girls. Here's to New England and the New Englanders!"

The two gentlemen were on their feet in an instant, clinking their glasses, and drinking the toast with enthusiasm.

"Well," said Gordon, as they settled back into their chairs, "your experience has been like mine. I came to this country with the feeling that I was to find no congenial spirits among the people. I represented the London West Shipping Company, and money was our object. We expected to squeeze it out of these narrow, crafty, ambitious provincials. But you know the embargo and the war, with

their endless complications, played the deuce with business," — the speaker sent fresh wreaths of smoke sailing through the air before he continued, — "and I was forced to linger here in order to save what did n't rot at the wharves or fall into the clutches of privateersmen, and, by Jove, I've learned to like the country and the people. I think I'll become a citizen."

Confidence begets confidence. While these men were the most loyal friends, a certain reserve had always marked their relations. The peace treaty now unsealed their lips.

"I came to New England, not only prejudiced against the people, but with the aim to pry into their secrets. I was suspicious, and so was the national administration. I wanted to find out what disaffection existed here, — whether these States really desired to withdraw from the Union and form an independent confederacy, or go back to colonial dependence upon Great Britain. I was never so chagrined and disappointed in my life. Taking the greatest pains to mingle with the citizens, going repeatedly to the principal New England cities, keeping in touch with several of the politicians to whom I had letters, saying little and hearing a great deal,

I have never detected anything like treason to the Union since I came into the Land of Steady Habits. If there is one public man whom I have learned to believe, esteem, and love, it is our Mr. Sherman, here, — the genial, dignified, noble spirit, the broad-minded and highly-gifted statesman. I take his word for it, that even the Hartford Convention was utterly devoid of any purpose to embarrass the nation; that it was what it claims to have been, — a meeting to devise means for help in the dark hour of extremity.”

Gordon sprang to his feet, reached forth his hand, and clasped Peyton — who had likewise risen from his chair — in a warm, manly embrace.

“Why, man, you’ve been through another experience similar to mine.” They were seated again, and Gordon was talking. “I came here looking for sedition and disloyalty. You see it made a vast difference with the plans of my company what might be the feelings of New Englanders on the subject of war. I was expected to try the pulse and temperature of these people. Although John Henry was an adventurer, and President Madison threw away fifty thousand

dollars and gained nothing worth naming, yet I knew Henry, and he made me believe that New England was ready for actual revolt; that her citizens longed for a return to the protection of the mother country. Had this been true, it would have advantaged the company which I represented. But, Peyton, the better I learned this people the more highly did I esteem them. Admitted, at last, to the confidence of the leaders in New England, I became profoundly convinced that these States had no more idea of joining with England than they had of setting up a monarchy among them; that they were just as loyal to true republicanism as Virginia or New York; that it only needed judicious management and actual invasion by a hostile nation to make the skies of New England ring with huzzas for the United States of America. These wise, matter-of-fact, thrifty people are sons of liberty; they love country, righteousness, God, with singleness of heart. It's a damnable lie to call them traitors!"

In the vehemence and sincerity of the speaker, he struck the table such a blow that the glasses jumped nervously, while the bowl of punch tipped jovially to one side, and jostled the glasses, as much as to say,

“Here’s to my New England, still loyal and true!”

The merry diversions of the day, the good fellowship, and the cheerful, boisterous fire on the hearth, the spirit of manly love, binding these two men into noble relations of fraternity, — all these things induced a frankness of confession, a freeness of speech, such as does not often mark the comradeship of men. They were reposing sacred confidences in each other, revealing the inmost secrets of life.

“It’s very curious how the tenor of my reports have changed from month to month,” continued Peyton. “But I have told a story that was as true to the facts as it was possible for me to tell it. All the bitterness, the hostility, of the opening chapters have turned to a fair, just, clear statement of existing conditions. It has not been altogether pleasing to the men that have trusted me. But I have asked them repeatedly whether they wished the truth or a highly colored, fanciful caricature. I have their word for it that they seek the plain facts, and I, at least, have tried to picture for them the exact feeling and purpose of the New England States.”

“Peyton, you’re an honest, high-minded

gentleman. I thank you for the confidence you show me, I esteem you for the righteous course which you have pursued, for I suppose it was in your power to add fuel to the fires of sectional passion and hatred. More than all, I love you for what you are, — as true and brave a soul as lives to-day.”

The men had risen to their feet again; they stood face to face, their expression that of lofty faith and deep affection.

“My friend,” — there was a quivering of the lips, a moistening of the eyes, as Peyton spoke, — “forgive me if I ever for one moment cherished a mean, cruel suspicion. Jackson tried to sow the seeds of distrust in my mind, but long ago every vestige of them disappeared. I never believed you to be the man who would worm himself into the regard and confidence of the Americans in order that you might betray us to old England.”

Gordon walked back and forth in front of the hearth, then looked down upon his friend, who had thrown himself into his chair.

“I came here,” said Gordon, speaking in slow, measured, serious way, “thinking there was something to be done for England, — and possibly for New England. I was left

free. My connections in the mother country were such that what I said or did had influence — widespread influence. There were men ready to profit by the turn of public affairs in this land. Peyton, I was drawn to these people the first years of my stay among them. Each year endeared them to me. It was partly because they welcomed me with such kindness to their homes, for I had never felt the thrill of glad and peaceful home life, and it was partly because I discovered something in the character of these people on the western side of the sea which appealed to me with great force. I will be as frank with you as you have been with me, and our mutual confidences shall be hidden forever away from all mortal eyes. It was in my power to fan the flames of international hatred and bitterness. My opportunities were many to do the services for England which meant the further crippling and harassment of this fair land. There came the temptation to engage in that which would bring me large emolument and ultimate honor in my native land, enabling me to attain the station and power for which I one time longed. Peyton, it was no temptation. My heart was with this people in America. I have never

said or written a word that would compromise me in the eyes of a just American citizen. I have done all in my power to win peace between England and the United States. My letters to the company that I am serving, my letters to friends and statesmen across the sea, have been, without exception, earnest, heartfelt endeavors to bind the two nations together in the relations of amity and mutual service."

The glow upon the speaker's face, the sincerity and enthusiasm of his tone, the splendid manliness of his bearing, added nothing to the force of conviction which his words carried to the heart of Peyton.

"The time is coming," was the answer, "when the better understanding shall prevail; when North and South, England and America, true lovers of freedom shall be one in heart and mind."

The morning dawned, and Peyton was on his way to Washington and Virginia, not certain that the warmest greetings awaited him; not even sure that on his return to Connecticut such welcome as he hoped for would gladden his soul.

CHAPTER XXV

THE CRUISE OF THE ROSE

JACKSON reached New York the latter part of April, tarrying long enough to meet old friends, put his affairs into good shape, and consult with Colonel Burr. It was the first of May when he reëntered Fairfield, carrying the honors of his Southwestern campaign in a lordly way.

A few days later, Gordon invited Mrs. Randolph, the sisters, and Davie to go with him on a schooner to Stonington and Newport, thinking that such a trip would hasten the boy's recovery, and make a pleasant outing for the girls.

The weather had become warm, almost sultry, the air being laden with the fresh odors of spring, so that the four days upon the sea, undisturbed by rough winds or chill storms, passed quickly in their delightful peace and freedom.

“Jackson did not seem in the best humor when he sailed for New York.” Gordon

addressed Miss Martha, as their ship glided swan-like through the waters.

“I have watched the man closely in his recent visits to our home, and, Mr. Gordon, I not only put no confidence in him, but I believe that he would stoop to all trickery, resort to crime itself, in order to gain his ends. I don't see why uncle David admits him to the house.”

One evening they were anchored in the harbor of New London. The clouds, banked against the west in long sierras of golden, roseate splendor, had fired the imagination, and made all the company dream beautiful fancies of far-away, glorious realms. When it grew too chill for sitting upon deck, they had withdrawn into the cabin, where they lingered over a cup of tea.

“This has been a day such as Peyton loves,” said Gordon. “He will come North when free to follow his impulse.”

“Mr. Peyton has seen the President, I don't know how many times,” piped Davie proudly. “And one day he took dinner with him, and he wrote us all about the lovely Mrs. Madison, and how she stayed in the White House when the British were coming, until she had to run, carrying away George Washington's picture.”

“The sweet, brave Quaker mistress is a charming hostess,” replied Gordon. “I’ve heard many tales of her hospitality and kindness.”

“Mr. Peyton has asked me to visit him on his Virginia plantation, and then I shall see these great folks, for they live in his county, you know.”

“He’s a grand man, Davie” —

“Yes,” interrupted the child, “he saved my life, and I love him, — we all love him, don’t we, Mary?” gazing eagerly, inquiringly into his sister’s face.

“Why, Davie, we love everybody that does you a kindness; how can we help it?”

“But Captain Jackson is very kind,” continued the boy. “Did you ever hear such stories? I love to hear him talk about the war and the Indians, and the British, the swamps, night attacks, the brawny Kentuckians, our great General Jackson. But I don’t like Jackson. When he looks me through and through, I shiver. Was Captain Jackson next to General Jackson in the battle of New Orleans? I think he must be almost as great a man.”

Gordon laughed heartily.

“Taking him at his own valuation, he is the general’s equal, if not his superior.”

The motion of the boat betokened a rising of the wind.

An hour later, when the child had fallen asleep, the ladies paced the deck with Gordon, enjoying the bracing air, the swish and break of waves tossing the schooner, and the swift-moving clouds, as the moon hid behind them or thrust them one side and pushed into the open.

Late at night, as Martha was lying sleepless in her berth, listening to the moaning of the winds and the regular pacing of Gordon on the planks above, her keen ears caught the sound of muffled oars. The moon was now withdrawn to dark hiding; not a star shed its dim light upon the waters; thick darkness shrouded the lonely, fearsome scene.

For three years the Sound had been the arena of war, a place where hostile fleets threatened the peace of towns, and terrorized the small craft engaged in trade and commerce. Such a condition of things not only fostered a spirit of adventure, — a packet running between New London and New York during these years never missed a trip, stealing in and out of the harbor in the gloom of night, — but it bred crime, leading to thievery, revenge, secret assaults upon proscribed men, brutality, and murder.

It was months after the war before the Sound assumed its former aspect of a secure and pleasant waterway between flourishing and ambitious seaports, for wicked men still haunted its bays and inlets, averse to a quiet, honest life, having learned to prey upon their fellows.

There were many stories of these predatory foes current among the shore people, suspicion often being directed toward doubtful characters known to all their neighbors.

When Gordon left New York, he carried with him a large amount of gold with which to pay the workmen engaged in repairing the vessels owned or employed by his company. A portion of this money still rested in his cabin, although he had paid out goodly sums that day in New London.

The sound of muffled oars startled the wakeful Martha, and she sprang from her berth to the porthole, thinking that she might pierce through the darkness and solve the mystery of the approaching boat. Cruel tales of robbery came to mind. Was it possible that some one had learned concerning the bags of coin concealed in the cabin of their schooner, and now was stealing upon them with fell purpose?

The impact of the waves upon the keel, the whistling of the winds, and the creaking of the ship made it difficult to distinguish the fall of an oar, but there came to her again the peculiar muffled sound, although the thick night shut out any vision of oncoming boat.

“It will be foolish to awaken mother or Mary,” she said to herself. “It may be a stray sailor in trouble, — lost in the uncertainty of the dark.”

She flung her garments upon her, and listened at the porthole, thinking that she heard hoarse whispers.

“I’ll creep on deck, and speak to Mr. Gordon,” continuing her speechless monologue.

He had taken his place as watch a part of each night since leaving Black Rock Harbor.

Her head was thrust above the companionway as the gentleman passed by in his solitary tramp.

“Mr. Gordon!”

The low, suppressed tones were heard above the din of the night, and he stopped suddenly in his walk.

“What is it, Miss Martha?”

“I’m sure that a rowboat approaches off

the larboard side, and I fear mischief. The times are still unsettled, you know."

Gordon hurried across the deck, leaned over the gunwales, and tried to see into the inky blackness beyond.

The girl stood one moment in listening attitude, then plunged across the vessel to the larboard side.

The sound of blows and groans, an indistinguishable call for help, a wild wrestling and awful fall, — these things smote upon her ears.

A scream which seemed to drive through every part of the schooner, a shrill, piercing, agonizing cry was heard, and then followed a confused, awful medley of noises, the quick discharge of pistols, a mighty scurrying of feet.

Gordon's sailors rushed to his rescue, Mary Randolph and little Davie climbed wildly upon deck, and called through the terror of the affray, but the awful gloom of the night hid the sight of hideous onslaught from their eyes.

Suddenly Miss Mary was seized by brawny arms and dragged toward the bow, but the child was by her side on the instant, fighting the shadowy miscreant with all the vicious

fury of a maddened animal, biting, scratching, tripping, pounding with might and main, so that the man stumbled and fell prone, carrying the two with him in the *mêlée*. A stab, a moan, and Davie relaxed his hold, lying silent as the grave, while Mary, with redoubled frenzy, tore the man's hair, dug into his eyes, and finally gripped him about the throat with such vise-like force that the fellow loosed his hold, and she slipped from his clutches into the darkness.

When Martha ran to the side of Gordon, it was to find him already assaulted by dim, shifting forms crowding over the side of the schooner. A mighty blow had sent one of the party tumbling into the sea, and Gordon, drawing his pistol, had fired into the face of another, but the men were agile as cats, well armed, and vengeful. A blow aimed at his head was impending, when the dauntless Martha flung herself against the assailant, sending him reeling like a drunken man across the deck, the girl recovering herself to rush a second time to Gordon's rescue, and help him beat back the oncoming foe. They were too many for him, his only hope being to keep them at bay until his own men rallied for his support. The darkness helped

to deceive the robbers, for it was impossible to know their own party in the stress of awful confusion.

It was at this moment that Gordon felt he stood face to face with his bitter enemy, for as he grappled with a fresh assailant, the sinewy, supple form seemed familiar; there was a certain motion of body which he had observed only in one person all his life, a rare, characteristic play of the strong right arm. And lost in the night was the woman who had warned him of impending danger, — the woman who had stood grandly by his side and fought like one wonted to bloody scenes. For her sake, for love's sake, for right's sake, he must end this wicked, horrible strife, and put the ghostly being who dared him beyond the pale of life. A moment they fought like fiends, — all the devils in them let loose, — the struggle being for the possession of a knife which the black pirate had half thrust into the vitals of Gordon. At last the robber's hand was free, — with the swiftness of the lightning from heaven, he lifted on high the blade, and struck the fateful blow; but as the instrument of death cut through the air a woman's hand struck wildly against the murderer's wrist, and the dagger entered his

own breast. An oath, a cry of despairing hatred, and the men, locked in each other's embrace, rolled toward the edge of the ship, while two shrill whistles, evidently signals to end the fray, sounded their clear alarm, and the robbers fled through the darkness to their waiting boat.

They found Gordon, bruised and bleeding, knocked senseless, where he had rolled in the embrace of his last assailant. The pirates carried their wounded away with them.

Miss Mary had fallen at the foot of the companionway when she fled from the pursuit of her would-be abductor. Fright, weakness, and pain were beyond endurance, so that she had lost consciousness.

Mrs. Randolph and Martha fairly stumbled over the form of little Davie. The child had been true to his charge unto the very last, defending his sister against the evil of the world, giving life itself in behalf of love, and now forever set at liberty from the thrall of his poor, weak frame.

With the robber crew there had disappeared one of Gordon's own sailors and the bag of gold taken from the chest in the cabin during the fight on deck.

CHAPTER XXVI

COLONEL BURR SEES A VISION

IT was June before Peyton came North, — the month of clear skies and singing birds.

The sisters were telling him the story of the robbery.

“It had been such a lovely, restful excursion! And how little Davie did enjoy it!” Martha began the narrative. “It only needed your presence, Mr. Peyton, to complete our happiness, for Davie talked incessantly about you. I don’t know how many times he spoke of the ‘raising,’ and your fearless rescue, always ending with his heartfelt tribute of deep love. It was like a tender, beautiful poem, — that devotion to his two knightly friends” —

The girl stifled a sob, while the gentleman dashed the tears from his eyes, and gazed into the deep blue of heaven.

“And to think,” said Mary, taking up the broken narrative of her sister, “that it was for me he gave his life! It breaks my heart.”

The silence was mellow with the hum of insects and the thrill of nature melodies.

“ Noble little hero ! ” exclaimed Peyton, in tenderest accents, thinking of the child’s great deed.

“ The very night of the tragedy, ” continued Martha, “ he had seemed so bright and hopeful, saying that he was to visit you by and by, and share the fun of your delightful Virginia plantation life. ”

“ We did n’t write you that one of the men employed by Mr. Gordon on his schooner turned traitor to him, and was really an accomplice in the robbery. Afterward, when he heard about the death of Davie, he wrote a most pitiful letter, confessing his crime, asking forgiveness, promising amendment, and begging us by the memory of little Davie, whom he had learned in his rough way to love, that he might have a fresh chance. Mr. Gordon gave him money enough to quit the country, — we persuaded him to do it, — and now the fellow is across the ocean. ” Mary had interrupted her sister. “ But it was an awful scene, ” — her mind reverting to the dark night, the sharp, awful conflict, the cries, groans, agony, the blood-smeared deck, the torn, disheveled clothes of the

ladies, the wounds of the men, and the limp, lifeless form of the stricken child. The sister shuddered, and halted in the story. "The sailor who confessed to Mr. Gordon said the robbers did not intend to hurt us. But we learned afterward that gold was not the only object."

Martha's eyes flamed as the thread of the story was passed to her.

"Mary was the prime motive of the assault," exclaimed the sister, with intense feeling. "Jackson turned abductor. Did I not tell you that he was a man who would never hesitate as to the means which he might use to gain his ends? Thank God, he is dead!" And the usually serene Martha became hysterical in the excess of her emotion.

"Great God!" cried Peyton, rising to his feet, and pacing the floor; "was the fellow at the bottom of this hideous crime? Was it Jackson with whom Gordon fought again?"

He clenched his hands; the color left his face, for the horror of the situation was now first brought home to him. The death of little Davie had moved him with a grief, profound, pathetic, but this frightful revelation was like fire burning into his soul. For a moment the anguish of the man passed ex-

pression, — the moment when he saw, as by a dream, this girl snatched away by the vile, diabolic creature he had learned to hate above the fury of madness.

The sisters sat terrified as they gazed upon the sudden, terrific play of passion in the man.

“Oh, pray do not look at us in that frightful way!” cried Mary, springing to her feet, and placing both hands upon the arm of their guest. “You make my very blood curdle,” — a little suppressed cry escaping as she spoke.

With a powerful effort Peyton mastered himself.

“Forgive me,” he said. “But, oh, the thought was enough to drive me mad. Thank God, the villain is dead!”

The brief play of hatred passed, then Martha continued the story, as they quietly re-seated themselves.

“It was little Davie that saved her from an awful fate. The huge sailor that seized Mary was taking her to the edge of the schooner, where the boat was waiting, when Davie ran to her help. It must have been a wild struggle, for both Mary and Davie fought him like tigers until they fell in a

heap together. It was then that the creature stabbed the child," — again there was a break in the recital, — "but Mary choked the brute until he loosed his hold, and then she ran from him, and swooned in the companion-way, where they found her after the fight was ended."

"Gordon did not write me these frightful details. And so it was my little friend that gave his life" — The sentence was never finished.

"Did you not hear how Jackson died?"

Mary asked the question, but the deathly pallor upon the face of her sister stayed the narrative.

"Colonel Burr told me that death came to him in some fracas with his cronies. Jackson was always a hot-head, the colonel remarked."

"Mr. Gordon sailed last week," said Mary, glad to change the theme of conversation.

"And did he leave no word for me?"

"I think he must have sent a letter to your Virginia home."

"But what did he say for himself? I can't guess why this sudden change of plan was made. And I told him that I should return at the earliest possible date."

“It was news from England that forced him to hasten over the sea. He had returned home with us, — how gently kind and sympathetic in our sorrow; he said and did everything to comfort us, and he tarried day after day, trying to hearten us for the long, sad weeks to come. One afternoon the mail brought him a thick packet, which he did not read until he came down here with a letter for uncle David, when, begging our pardon for what he called the discourtesy, he broke the seal, and began his letter. We noticed a quick change in his face; his hands trembled, and he suddenly arose, saying that his packet contained news of importance, and he must excuse himself. An hour later, he came to tell us that it was an imperative summons to England, he must start that very evening for New York in order to catch the first out-bound ship, and he would write us later; and in a short time, if God willed (so he put it), we should see him here in Connecticut again.”

Martha gave the brief account in a spirit of such absolute trust that she inspired others with her own sweet, beautiful confidence, albeit the mystery of his sudden departure was altogether unsolved, and Gordon had not spoken a word to dispel it.

One summer evening Colonel Burr alighted at the home of his friend, David Hardy. The weeks of Peyton's sojourn were drawing to a rapid close.

Mrs. Randolph and Martha had passed into the parlor, where they soon yielded to the fascinations of the dethroned statesman's conversation. Childhood days were revived, the gay pranks of rash youth laughed over. Burr had learned that grief shadowed the household, so that he sought in his own inimitable way to lessen the pain of their recent loss. War stories were told as only Burr could recite them; old friends came to mind, and the humors of their conduct, — a hundred delightful recollections.

While Colonel Burr was telling one of his brightest stories, Mary appeared in the doorway. Was it an apparition? Clad in white, the soft, delicate drapery enhancing the subtle loveliness of her face, her dark, deep eyes suffused with the strange, new, tender light of love, every look and motion expressive of natural grace, force of character, and nobility of soul bravely manifest, she stood for the first time in the presence of this man.

The story abruptly halted, for Colonel Burr's face assumed a deadly pallor, his eyes

were riveted upon the figure before him, his heart leaped within his breast, an awful tremor seized him; he staggered to his feet.

“It is” — But Mrs. Randolph did not finish the sentence.

“Theodosia!” murmured Burr hoarsely, clenching his hands like a man seeking to sustain himself through some quick, intense agony pressing relentlessly into his soul. For one fleeting moment she who was dearer to him than all the priceless joys of life had come back from her unknown death, and now stepped forth in freshened, beauteous maidenhood once more, to greet and love him, as in the sweet, glad days of old. For one fleeting, tragic moment Burr lived over again the hour when Alston stood with Theodosia in the songful fragrant morn of their plighted troth, and a father’s blessing rested upon them. It was a vision, beautiful, all too splendid for earth, which dimly, sweetly, radiantly filled his beclouded eyes; he was recalled from the anguish, the ecstasy of the marvelous vision by the low, rich voice of Peyton.

“I am glad to see you, Colonel Burr. I have often told Miss Mary and the other ladies of the family that your kindness

plucked me out of the storm, and sent me on my way rejoicing."

The guest mastered his emotion by a supreme effort of will, hiding the tumult raging in his bosom, and bowed in a courtly way.

"Miss Mary's *name* is familiar to you." Peyton turned to the girl close beside him as he responded to the bow. "Is it possible that you now meet her for the first time?"

Colonel Burr, crossing the room with all the noble dignity of his fine manners, raising to his lips the delicate hand of the young woman, saluted her with gentle, captivating deference.

"Child," said he, the pathos of his mellow, insinuating tones appealing with infinite tenderness to every person in the room, "you are the living image of my heart of hearts. Methought it was my own daughter who had come to greet me."

There swept through every mind swift thoughts of the matchless Theodosia, who had gone down to the sea in a ship never to gain safe harbor.

The wondrous loveliness glowing in the face of the girl assumed an exalted aspect; a great, pure, sweet compassion shone forth from her luminous eyes; in very affluence of

affection, moved to the quick by the tragedy of this man's desolation, she touched her lips to his pallid cheek.

It was like a sacrament.

"Child," Colonel Burr broke the hush of the solemn moment, "may God bless and keep you!"

Did the spirit of the saintly Jonathan Edwards and the spirit of the angelic Sarah Pierrepont speak for once a *benedicite* through the lips of the errant grandson?

"May your happiness," Burr wedded the man and the woman in his thought and prayer, "equal the happiness of Alston and Theodosia."

"She has promised to be the mistress of a Virginia home," said Peyton, as he reached for her right hand and held it in his own.

These are the strange circumstances under which Marshall Peyton and Mary Randolph told that they had plighted troth.

CHAPTER XXVII

UNDER THE FROWNING BREASTWORKS OF FORT UNION

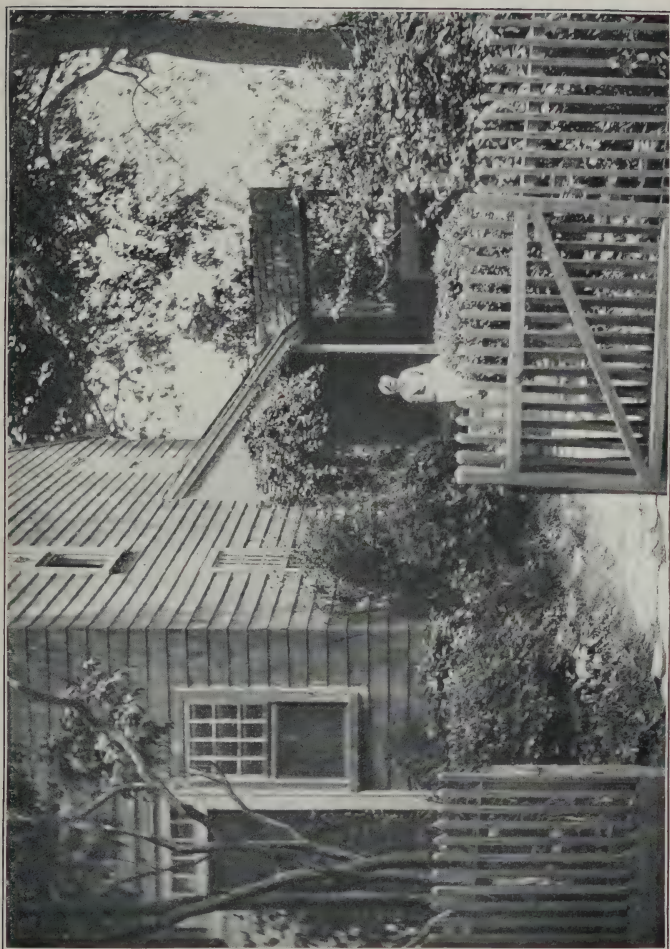
GORDON'S letters said that he would sail in a few days, but the days became weeks, and the weeks grew into months; still the waiting did not weary Martha, neither did she abate one jot or tittle of her faith.

At the last there were no letters. Peyton came North to claim his bride and take her to the home of his childhood and youth. With Davie gone never to return, and Mary now settled in the sunny South, the old homestead seemed a drear place; yet the light burned with fadeless constancy, and a marvelous, sweet peace was undisturbed.

"He will come when the way is clear," said Martha to her sister, as she bade her good-by.

"I never fret," she wrote weeks later to Mary. "His affairs detain him. He will come."

One mellow, dreamy afternoon in Septem-



THE WAITING DID NOT WEARY

ber, the stage-coach from New York drove up to the old tavern with unusual flourish of whip and sounding of horn, for Gordon had come, and the friendly man on the box, who had received a much larger passage-money than the ordinary six cents a mile, put a fair measure of hilarity into whip and horn, jolly speech, and genial handshake.

“And so they have left you desolate!” exclaimed Gordon, when Martha told him that Peyton and Mary were happily settled on the ancestral plantation.

“They have left us, but we are not desolate. Their happiness we share, although a long journey separates us.”

“Your tell-tale eyes reveal no pain or sorrow,” continued Gordon. “And yet, child, there must have been many lonely hours.” He was thinking of the sad changes, and his own enforced absence.

The lost months had been a checkered season of reflection for himself. He had lived over again his childhood, youth, and the early manhood days, mingling with this bitter past many sweet memories and sweeter anticipations clustering about a little home in New England.

It was the day following his return that

they wandered off to the shore. They visited the old tide-mill, they crossed to Battery Point, they climbed into Fort Union.

“Now, I must tell my story,” said Gordon, as they found a cosy recess under the shadow of the frowning breastworks.

The sea glimmered beneath them and sang a low, monotonous refrain; the sky had lost its blue in the golden haze of the luxurious autumn day; the distant fields were dotted over with fair pictures of harvest, — the whispering trees beginning to deck themselves in the brilliant, gorgeous tints wrought out by the alchemy of nature. It was the hour and the place to reveal one’s heart.

“I have never disclosed my real name and identity to a single person in America.” This was the way in which he began his narrative. “Not that I felt ashamed to do it, but simply as a thing of expediency.”

“But you were never able to hide the fact that you are a gentleman,” interrupted Martha proudly.

Smiling, he continued: —

“When I was born, my mother, and all England for that matter, supposed that I was heir to a noble title and a great estate. I was reared and educated as one who in due

time must assume the grave responsibilities of headship to a distinguished family. It was not a happy life that I led. Marriage is said to be a lottery, — well, there are blanks and there are prizes,” — his look and manner were severe, — “and my parents, I believe, were mutually disappointed, so that they soon agreed to live apart. I saw little of them, for I was under tutors, and then at Eton and the University, my father traveling over the world meanwhile, and my mother giving herself to art, books, and society. The sudden death of my father — I took my degree that year — plunged us into fresh miseries, for it brought to light the fact that he had been driven into a secret marriage with a woman of low degree several years before he knew my mother. There were two sons as the fruit of this union, the mother dying during the infancy of the second child. These two boys disappeared, and my father took no pains to trace them, the fortune which he had settled upon the woman vanishing with the children. He had never acknowledged her as his wife; her own family did not know that she was married; the woman chose to hide the fact, and when her relatives had squandered the money, the boys

shifted for themselves. There was, you see, an awful sin committed, but it is not for me to heap reproaches upon my father."

They watched a score of sails glinting in the mellow light, as the fleet moved on toward the ocean.

"It was not until my father's death that the one living witness of his first marriage came to me and offered, for a consideration, namely, an enormous sum of money, to keep the secret and destroy all record of this foreign and disgraceful alliance. I did not hesitate in respect to a decision. I am not the man to make compromises with wrong or entail injustice. The sons were discovered, poor, worthless, ignorant fellows; the elder entered upon his inheritance, and my mother's heart of pride was broken. She died of grief, — not grief for her husband, but grief over the shattered fortunes of her son."

Gordon paused in the narrative, and observed the frolic of a hundred sea-gulls as they gathered upon a stretch of sand left visible by the receding tide.

Martha was too deeply moved to interrupt the strange tale.

"My father must have feared this dénouement, for while, of course, all the entailed

property would go to the eldest son, he had willed everything else to me, my mother, to be sure, having her dower rights. I accepted the changed conditions of my life, and when my mother died, I came to America. A host of loyal friends cheered me through those hard days, but something of my ancestor's restless spirit drove me forth to wander up and down the earth. I traveled until I wearied of it; then I embarked in the business with which I have been connected these several years. It was here in America, this rugged, inchoate, half-civilized country, that I first entered into the joy of life. The past was separated from me by years and the great sea. I became interested in this vast western realm of undeveloped riches and magnificent possibilities. My heart beat in sympathy with the crude, eager, sanguine, enthusiastic, prevailing spirit of the people. When war impended, I used my influence to avert it, for I saw the folly of an appeal to arms. Friends and partners in Great Britain appointed me a kind of peace commissioner at large, to work with American acquaintances in creating a sentiment favoring the amicable settlement of our difficulties. A selfish motive first prompted me to this

course; our business was going to rack and ruin. But later, when I had learned to respect America, and count her people as real brothers, my heart was in all this urgency for peace. The wickedness of such a war as we waged struck home to me. We were fighting our kith and kin, members of the same great race, — the race destined to lead the nations of the world in the great victories of industry and enterprise, free government, and advancing civilization. I was suspected of complicity in such ignoble service as that done by John Henry. Jackson tried to brand me as an English spy. But faith and determination wavered not. New England became especially dear, for I met congenial spirits, — men, the peers of living English statesmen, women that would grace any court of Europe. As the intimations of peace came to me, my heart said, ‘Make this new, great land your home,’ and I had decided to cast in my lot with the people who seemed nearer than my very flesh and blood in the mother country. More than all, there came to me, in this virgin land, a vision of love. It was a loveless life which I had lived.”

His deep, bass voice, low and gentle under its quiet self-restraint, was vibrant with feeling.

“I never knew the meaning of friendship until Peyton taught it. Noble fellow, how my heart goes out to him in his great happiness! There were hours when it seems to me my soul was knit to the soul of Peyton, as David to Jonathan. God bless him! Miss Martha, I believe he would have died for me. I love him as no other man among men.”

“Peyton is a pure and beautiful spirit,” whispered Martha tenderly, fearing by any word to break the train of Gordon’s thought.

“And it was here that I first learned the meaning of home. What hours have I spent in the atmosphere of love always filling the one cottage which I have haunted through these years! Dear little Davie!” — the speaker hesitated — “Miss Mary, gay and happy as the forest songsters of sweet June, the younger sister serene, yet captivating in her spinster-like primness and reserve, concealing untold wealth of womanly treasures,” — he gazed intently into the face so close to him, — “these are the days worth all the world’s best gifts!”

The pause was broken by the incessant rippling of the merry wavelets chasing each other along the shining beach.

“ Miss Martha, it was in this strange, dear land that the noblest impulses of my slow, dumb nature awakened. I longed to do something for my country, make a sacrifice, and deepen the sense of right in the hearts of her citizens; and then I longed to help this glorious America, join my fortunes with her people, and take a part in that magnificent destiny which, please God, awaits her; and then I longed to see England and America join heart and hand in the leadership of the world, — this mighty, all-conquering Anglo-Saxon race pushing into the years with its guerdon of free government, expanding intelligence, and vital Christian civilization. I longed to take some little share in that which the God of nations has foreordained for this modern Israel of the world.”

Gordon had risen to his feet, a great light transforming his countenance, the eloquence of the man entrancing his single auditor.

“ And, Miss Martha, it was here that I came to learn the meaning of woman’s love. The sorrow, disaster, and misery which had touched me in the domestic realm naturally hardened the heart. I had thought that love was a dream, a chimera, the *ignis fatuus* of the damp forest; the selfishness and bitterness

of men, the vanity, worldliness, ambition of the women I was accustomed to meet filled my mind with foolish and deceitful fancies, for I came to believe that all were alike proud and heartless. Thank God, I was led into a happy New England home."

A radiance like the splendor of the mid-day sun illumined Martha's features, as he continued the narrative.

"The war ended, and peace clearing the path for commerce, I had felt that one great object in my life might now be realized. I longed to have a home. This fair land was the choice of my heart. It only needed the woman that I loved to complete my happiness. It was at this point that there came to me an imperative summons from old England. The day you well remember. My solicitor had written me the bare facts of the case. These two half-brothers, who had for years been sinking deeper into depths of degradation, having surrounded themselves with all that was vicious and brutal in association, were suddenly snuffed out of life, as a rough hand will sometimes extinguish the flame of a candle. A wild orgy ended in a quarrel, a mortal wound for each brother, and death before the next sunrise. The grave responsi-

bilities of family, estate, lofty station, and local leadership were thus unexpectedly thrust upon me after years of virtual renunciation. I went back to England determined that my stay should be short, for my heart was in America. But the affairs of the ancestral estate were all at odds, and it took months to disentangle them. I sailed for New York on the day that my lawyers loosed me from their grip."

The sky above them suddenly darkened with the flight of birds winging a way to their Southern home.

"Child, I must go back to my native land. It is the season of migration," — pointing to the myriad creatures following their distant leader through the thickening haze. "Will you not flit across the sea with me, and return to the old home of your ancestors?"

CHAPTER XXVIII

IN WHICH THEY PASS FROM PLANTATION TO CASTLE

“It’s a letter from Gordon!” said uncle David, stumbling into the room where Mrs. Randolph was sitting. “Read it aloud, Lois,” handing the packet to his sister; “my eyes grow dim; people don’t write with the neat, clear hand we used to see; and, Lois, people don’t speak in loud, distinct tones, as they did when we were children.”

“It comes like floods of sunshine,” exclaimed the brave mother, as she glanced down the pages. “David, only three weeks have passed since they were married, but what a long, long time it seems! How happy they are, and what a picture of old Virginia they send us,” still continuing her swift survey of the letter’s contents.

“They’re back in Washington, and Peyton and Mary came with them.”

“It’s a wonderfully quaint, free, jolly life which these planters live,” — Mrs. Randolph

was now reading aloud to her brother. "Peyton's acres stretch into the many thousands. He's a great landed proprietor like some of us Englishmen. We've been making comparisons, and our estates run into the same figures. He must own more than two hundred slaves, and they are fat, well-contented, lazy, good-natured creatures, adoring their master. I congratulate you that slavery has passed into its sere and yellow leaf among New Englanders. Peyton treats his people like children; he's the very soul of kindness and goodwill, but the practice is bound to bring trouble."

Skipping further paragraphs upon the subject, Mrs. Randolph read:—

"They gave us a royal welcome; great bonfires, the ample, straggling, hospitable mansion aglow with life and merrymaking, more than fourscore neighbors being present to grace the festivities, and all the dark-skinned population of the county, I should think. In the midst of our own frolic, the whole company streamed forth to negro quarters, where the grandest jubilation of all had been arranged, and there we saw the grotesque, comical dances of the darkies, and heard their weird, pathetic singing, with the

curious accompaniment of swaying bodies, swinging arms, and other fantastic motions. It was one of the strangest sights I ever witnessed."

There followed other descriptive paragraphs.

"We find that Peyton has been very modest in the little which he chose to tell about himself. He is a distant cousin of President Madison, and his Excellency seems fond of him. We dined with the President and his extremely interesting lady the other day. They are now living in the Octagon, a pleasant house in a good location (it was here that the treaty of peace was signed), and we had a delightful time. Mrs. Madison's table was loaded down with good things, — a sort of harvest-home supper I called it, — characteristic of Southern hospitality. She quite prides herself upon this style of entertainment. 'Abundance is preferable to elegance,' she remarked to me, and then she gave a very neat turn to her apology (if one calls it an apology). 'Our profusion arises from the happy circumstance of our superabundance and prosperity,' she said. 'I do not hesitate to sacrifice the delicacy of European taste for the less elegant but more

liberal fashion of Virginia.' We met Senator Hillhouse, Colonel Tallmadge, Mr. Sturges, and several other Connecticut worthies, and nearly all our New England friends in Congress. I don't think the President believes half that Peyton tells him about the Eastern States. He evidently feels that the young man, having married a wife in that hostile region, necessarily becomes a prejudiced and untrustworthy observer. Although peace has been declared, many a fight will be waged between Federalist and Republican."

The sweet words of praise for Mary, Mrs. Randolph read to herself.

"We sail in two days," wrote Gordon. "She's a fast ship, and lies awaiting us down the Chesapeake."

It was midwinter when Mr. David Hardy brought from the post another welcome packet.

"It is like a beautiful dream that will vanish in the morning," so ran Martha's letter. "We tarried in London a few days, where I met the Duke of Wellington, the adored hero of the day; Lord Castlereagh, Sir Robert Peel, the brilliant Canning, and last but not least, of course, the Prince Regent. (He's not popular with the people, I

see.) I met such a host of great folk that their names and quality have escaped me. Then we drove in Gordon's chariot, — I shall always call him Gordon; he has a dozen names and titles, and says I can take my choice, — and it was the funniest and most gorgeous, elegant vehicle I ever saw, pulled by six horses, with outriders and postilions, and when we arrived at his estate we were greeted by a band of music and a procession of yeomanry; and we rode and rode through acres upon acres of fields, meadows, forests, with hedges and hedges. Oh, such magnificent trees, and such wonderful vistas opening through woods, and the prettiest little cottages and farmhouses sprinkled over the landscape! I thought we should never get to the castle! — dear mother, think of living in a castle, — but by and by the massive stone walls and battlements loomed up in the distance, although it began to grow dark. Then we came to a great stretch of lawn, which must be marvelously lovely in its season, and then more hedges with gardens, and such curious, interesting nooks and retreats. All of a sudden, the song of children struck upon our ears, and torches flared through the gathering gloom, and a great shout went up from

hundreds of throats. It was the little people of the estate who greeted us, singing their holiday carols, and all the tenantry of the estate coming to do honor, so Gordon said, to the American bride; but I think it was love's welcome to my noble husband, — the welcome of a people distracted by the wickedness of the former lord of this vast estate, now rejoicing in the advent of a worthy heir. The songs of the children brought tears to my eyes, the myriad torches cast their strange spell about me, and then every window in the long, irregular, frowning pile before us blazed with light, shining out against the dark background of shadowy hills and forests, like a magic transparency."

Mrs. Randolph stayed her reading as she wiped away the tears which bedimmed her eyes.

"When we drove up to the castle, a mighty cheer filled the heavens, the place was dense with people, there was more singing, broken by the shouts of the sturdy tenantry, lights flashed all about us, as many as sixty house-servants — just think of it — ranged along on each side the entrance, and we walked between the bowing, laughing, crying domestics (they were crying for very

joy, you know); then the stately old house-keeper met us. Oh, what a beautiful welcome she gave, and then I — why, mother, dear, I could n't keep the tears back any longer, and they carried me off to a lovely room, where I rested, and ” —

Again the mother halted in her reading, and bent her head in deep thought.

“ Gordon says it will be our mission to foster good feeling between England and America. He is as loyal to my beloved native land as one born and bred in dear Connecticut. I hear people talk about Mr. Washington Irving and his agreeable writings, and the end of the war, and the good luck which favored our navy (that way of putting it always angers me); and the Duke of Wellington asked me if I knew General Jackson. But the people of Great Britain are strangely ignorant in respect to everything American. They eye me with incredulity and amazement. I verily think that they expected to see a squaw dressed in blankets, beads, and feathers, — a second Pocahontas. When it was told that ‘ His Lordship ’ — I laugh when I write the high-sounding title — had brought his bride from the wilds of the western wilderness ” —

There was a break in the familiar writing, and a strong, masculine hand interjected a sentence: "Well they might stare upon my peerless flower, plucked from the soil of the coming empire, — there's not her match for beauty or goodness in all the king's realm."

Then Martha told her fair romance to the chapter's end.

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